# FP



# Will This Time Be Different?

SHERI BERMAN ON WHY CRISES ONLY SOMETIMES LEAD TO CHANGE

ROBERT KUTTNER ON HOW TO END ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

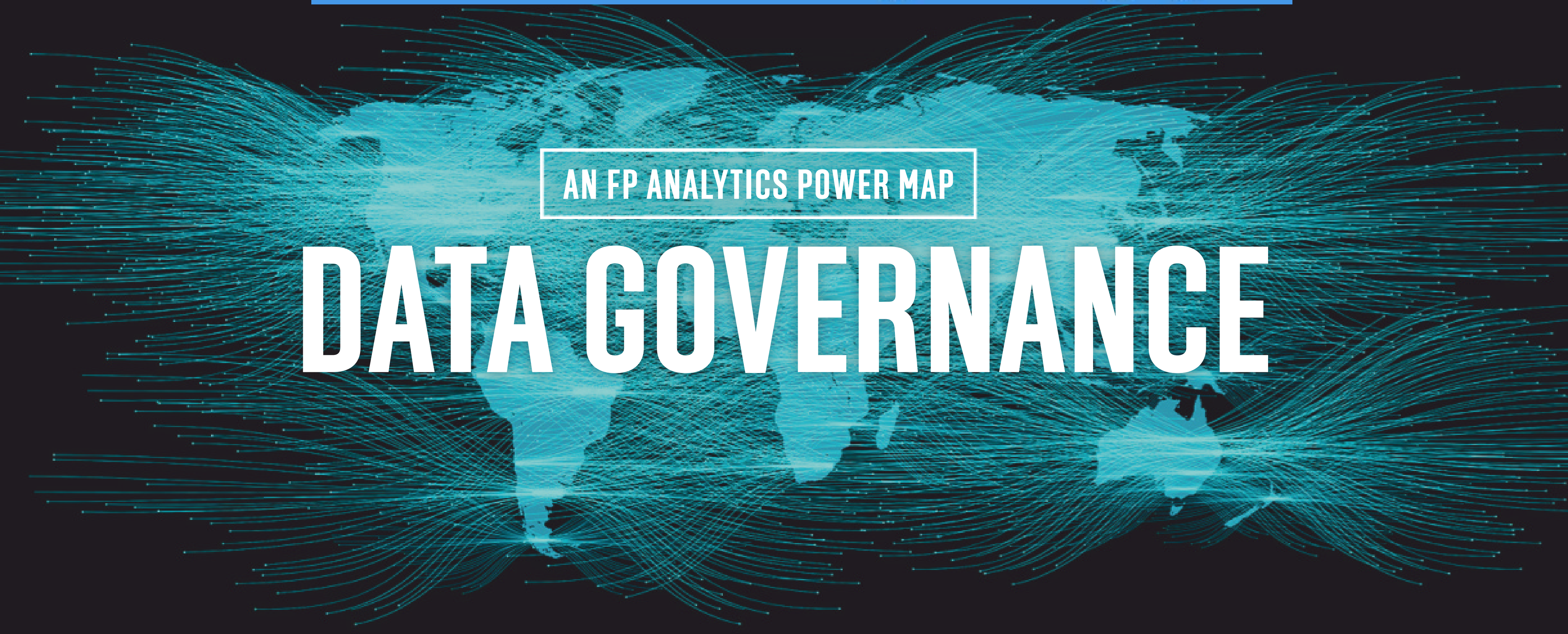
MARGRETHE VESTAGER ON HOW TO REGULATE BIG TECH

OONA A. HATHAWAY AND SCOTT J. SHAPIRO ON A NEW MODEL OF GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

HENRY FARRELL AND ABRAHAM NEWMAN ON THE NEW SHAPE OF GLOBALIZATION



**PLUS:** RACE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



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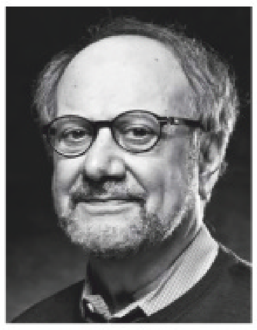
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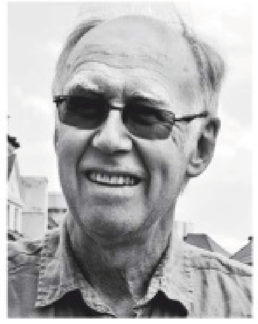
**Sheri Berman** is a professor of political science at Barnard College, researching European history and politics, the development of democracy, and the history of the left, as well as a columnist at FOREIGN POLICY. Her latest book is *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancien Régime to the Present Day*.



**Melissa Chan** is a national and foreign affairs reporter based between Los Angeles and Berlin. She is a collaborator with the Global Reporting Centre and a term member at the Council on Foreign Relations.



**Robert Kuttner** is a co-founder and co-editor of the *American Prospect* and a professor at Brandeis University's Heller School, teaching courses on political economy and globalization. His latest book is *The Stakes: 2020 and the Survival of American Democracy*.



**Peter C. Perdue** is a professor of history at Yale University and the author of *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*. His current research focuses on Chinese frontiers, Chinese environmental history, the history of tea, and the year 1900 in world history.



**Kelebogile Zvobgo** is the founder and director of the International Justice Lab at the College of William & Mary and a Ph.D. candidate in political science and international relations at the University of Southern California.



**Meredith Loken** is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a nonresident fellow with the Modern War Institute at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.

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> ***A global crisis like no other needs a global response like no other.***
>
> —Kristalina Georgieva

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# arguments



## The Future of the State

### Ten leading thinkers on what government will look like after the pandemic.

W

**WE ARE ALL STATISTS NOW.** Since the coronavirus pandemic struck and the global economy unraveled, we have looked to governments to mobilize medical resources, implement containment measures, and spend previously unimaginable sums to support workers and businesses. Out of these emergency policies could arise new institutions and ways of solving problems that will benefit us long after the pandemic.

There is a dark side, too. Governments have assumed new powers to trace, track, and control. Some of them have already abused these powers, and it is entirely conceivable that they may never give them back.

To help us understand how the pandemic will permanently expand government powers—for good or for bad—FOREIGN POLICY asked 10 leading thinkers from around the world to weigh in.

Illustration by BRIAN STAUFFER

# After the Pandemic, Big Brother Will Be Watching

*by* STEPHEN M. WALT

**GOVERNMENTS AROUND THE WORLD** have assumed unprecedented control over their citizens' daily lives in response to the coronavirus. Democracies and dictatorships alike have closed borders, imposed quarantines, shut down much of the economy, and implemented a variety of testing, tracing, and surveillance regimes in order to contain the infection. Those that acted fastest and adopted more stringent measures have been most successful. Leaders who denied, dissembled, and delayed are responsible for thousands of preventable deaths.

As infection rates decline and effective treatments become available, many countries will gradually relax most of the restrictions that are now in place. Some of the leaders who assumed emergency powers during the crisis may relinquish them. But get ready for the new normal: Political opportunism and fear of a new pandemic will lead many governments to leave some of their newly acquired powers in place. Expect to have your temperature taken or throat swabbed when you travel, and get used to having your phone observed, your picture taken, and your location tracked in many countries—with the use of that information not always restricted to matters of public health. In the post-coronavirus world, Big Brother will be watching.

**STEPHEN M. WALT** (*@stephenWalt*) is the Robert and Renée Belfer professor of international affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School and a contributor at FOREIGN POLICY.

# The Crisis Will Be a Boon for Good Government

*by* ALEXANDRA WRAGE

**FIRST, THE BAD NEWS:** As the world pours trillions of dollars into stimulus programs and the medical sector, there will be endless opportunities for corruption and graft.

The good news is that the inevitable stories of squandered resources and opaque dealings will ultimately turn the pandemic into a boon for good governance and increased accountability. From the Arab Spring and other movements, we know that societies have little patience for corruption when the population is suffering. This will be especially true for authoritarian governments, which will almost certainly face a backlash for concealing the scope of the problem and allowing officials to profit from the pandemic.

By comparison, governments that are responsive, data-driven, energetic, collaborative, and innovative will have proved superior to autocracies in delivering their societies from the coronavirus and its economic costs—leaving these governments strengthened and enjoying greater public trust in the future.

**ALEXANDRA WRAGE** (*@Alexandra Wrage*) is the president of TRACE, a nonprofit founded to advance commercial transparency worldwide.

**We know that societies have little patience for corruption when the population is suffering.**

# The Shape of Future Government Will Be Forged in Asia

*by* JAMES CRABTREE

**THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC** is set to usher in a new era of bigger, more intrusive government in almost every advanced economy—but that change will be felt most dramatically in Asian nations that have long prided themselves on their relatively lean, minimal states.

Most rich countries have moved quickly to turn on the spending taps, protecting their citizens and businesses with wage support schemes and cash payouts. That is true in the United States and Germany but also in places like Singapore and Malaysia, whose leaders have traditionally shied away from expensive fiscal expansions.

Future pandemic management will clearly require larger governments, too, as states rush to create expansive new tools of disease control, workplace management, and social surveillance in the hope of curbing future outbreaks in advance of a vaccine. Again, this is an area where Asian countries such as South Korea and Japan are likely to take the lead, given their mixture of high state capacity, technological know-how, and relatively relaxed approach to privacy regulation.

In short, the era of big government is returning, but it will manifest itself in ways that are quite different from the previous era of large states during the 1960s and 1970s—and much of its new shape will be forged not in the West but in the East.

**JAMES CRABTREE** (*@jamescrabtree*) is an associate professor in practice at the National University of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy and a contributor at FOREIGN POLICY.

# Industrial Policy Is Back

*by* SHANNON K. O'NEIL

**AS COUNTRIES AND COMPANIES STRUGGLE** with the effects of COVID-19 on work and production, industrial policy is making a comeback. After decades of free market momentum, governments in developed countries and emerging markets alike are embracing influential and long-lasting roles for themselves in the basic workings of their economies.

So far, this has involved increasing the management of trade by means of tariffs, licenses, quotas, product standards, and even outright export bans, particularly in food and medical supplies. It has also included billions in cash and other public benefits to companies to bring home manufacturing currently done abroad, such as the $2.3 billion Japan is now paying its companies to leave China.

With the World Trade Organization faltering, this is likely just the start of a raft of public subsidies, tax breaks, government purchases and stockpiling, buy-local requirements, and other schemes that nations will put in place to shape the production of and access to a wider array of goods and services deemed essential on national security grounds—now defined ever more broadly to include risk of disruption, overdependence on China, or the provision of jobs. To be sure, efforts to maintain and perhaps even expand free trade won't end. But many of these negotiations will assume, condone, and sometimes even codify more, rather than less, direct government intervention in markets.

**SHANNON K. O'NEIL** *(@shannonkoneil)* is the vice president, deputy director of studies, and Nelson and David Rockefeller senior fellow for Latin America studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

# A New Age of Overbearing Government

*by* ROBERT D. KAPLAN

**LIKE OTHER LIFE-TRANSFORMING CRISES** such as World War II, the coronavirus pandemic will likely ignite an urge for the protective embrace of big government.

After three decades of wealth creation on a historically unprecedented scale, we may now be on the cusp of an unprecedented period of wealth redistribution in the form of higher taxes to fund an expansion of health care and other services.

The new kinds of surveillance of individuals with which some countries have successfully battled the pandemic may be a harbinger of the future. Privacy will increasingly become an issue in this new age of overbearing government. And so will government debt, which is already mushrooming out of all proportion. With the pandemic heating up the U.S.-China rivalry, calls for increased U.S. defense spending loom just over the horizon. How will we pay for it all? That will constitute the real debate.

A bigger government with a larger role for experts on public health and other subjects may be on its way, along with an intensified populist backlash against it. With the pandemic response in the United States and many other countries rather uncoordinated, there will be a tendency to strengthen the role of national governments in the post-coronavirus world. As a result, our lives may soon become more regulated than ever.

**ROBERT D. KAPLAN** is the author of 19 books on foreign affairs, including *The Good American: The Epic Life of Bob Gersony, the U.S. Government's Greatest Humanitarian*, forthcoming in October.

# Some Governments Are Using the Crisis to Silence Critics

*by* KENNETH ROTH

**A CRISIS NEED NOT LEAD** to a permanent expansion of government powers—as long as the public remains vigilant.

In times of crisis, international human rights law allows all governments to temporarily limit certain rights—by means of travel restrictions and social distancing rules, for example—as long as the restrictions are strictly necessary, proportionate, and nondiscriminatory. Some governments, however, are trying to use the coronavirus pandemic to silence critics, expand surveillance, and entrench their rule. Whether they succeed will depend on whether the public understands that this would only increase the likelihood and severity of future public health disasters.

Censorship restricts the free flow of information that is so essential in recognizing and effectively responding to health threats. Surveillance that fails to protect privacy discourages voluntary cooperation, a prerequisite for any successful public health initiative. Checks and balances on executive power—an independent legislature, judiciary, media, and civil society—ensure that governments serve the public's welfare rather than their own political interests.

In short, the pandemic makes it clear that human rights should be upheld not only out of principle but for powerful pragmatic reasons as well. If the public appreciates these reasons, sufficient pressure can be put on governments to prevent them from profiting from tragedy. If not, we may find ourselves in a world with both greater risk of disease and less regard for human rights.

**KENNETH ROTH** *(@KenRoth)* is the executive director of Human Rights Watch.

# Local Government Will Emerge Stronger

*by* ROBERT MUGGAH

**THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC** is exposing the quality of governments around the world. Many national leaders have failed the test—in contrast to the leaders of regions and cities, who have faced the pandemic head-on in their communities, showed greater competence, and earned the trust of their constituents. In the process, the virus is clarifying the division of powers between different levels of government and strengthening the hand of regions and cities.

The current focus of governors and mayors is on saving lives, delivering essential services, maintaining law and order, and supporting economic recovery. But already, there are local leaders looking beyond the pandemic and reimagining life in their communities. Limited finances will favor cost-effective policies that generate multiple benefits—including better ways to provide health care to the most vulnerable and promoting greener economies. Future government services will be more digitalized, leaner, and more distributed.

Throughout history, infectious disease outbreaks have had a profound effect on local governance. The bubonic plague in the 14th century led to a rethinking of squalid urban spaces. Cholera outbreaks in the 19th century triggered massive urban redevelopment schemes and a dramatic buildout of sewage systems. The current coronavirus pandemic will likewise generate transformations in governance—from invasive surveillance technologies to track infections and enforce quarantines to major spending on health care to keep this and future diseases under control.

**ROBERT MUGGAH** is the founder of the Igarapé Institute and the SecDev Group.

# The Technocrats Will Get Their Hands Dirty

*by* ADAM POSEN

**PAST MACROECONOMIC POLICYMAKING** focused on key variables: growth, inflation, unemployment, debt. This allowed central bankers and the like to tell themselves and their publics that they were only looking after the general welfare, not making distributional choices. The pandemic and its fallout, however, have compelled the economic technocrats to get their hands dirty with allocative decisions—which companies get bridge loans, which work arrangements get subsidized, which assets get purchased. This makes crisis policies both more effective and, as long as the loans and purchases are transparent, more accountable.

It also removes the gloves that previously kept policymakers somewhat clean but with a looser grip on events. Central banks, finance ministries, and financial regulators will come out of this crisis with new forms of direct intervention and some old ones unseen in decades and previously abandoned as distorting markets. But the global economy we live in today, where markets are recurrently disrupted by crises, requires strong hands, not laissez faire.

Lines between fiscal, financial, and monetary policy will be blurred to good effect—it was always disingenuous to pretend that there were strict divisions. Norms that previously prevented cooperation across government agencies will be replaced in response to the economic realities. Independence is nice to profess, but it is little comfort when you cannot deliver the desired outcome in splendid isolation.

**ADAM POSEN** (*@AdamPosen*) is the president of the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

# After We Beat the Pandemic, We Must Cure Affluenza

*by* KUMI NAIDOO

**SHAPING THE POST-PANDEMIC WORLD** starts with the acknowledgment that we are all infected by affluenza: We consume too much and equate conspicuous consumption with success and happiness in life. Valuing economies purely on the basis of GDP has been recognized as a failure that must be addressed if we are to have a chance at creating a more equitable world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that we need a radical rethink of the production and distribution of food and other essential goods for all of us in society to live in good health, peace, and prosperity. We should now be pushing for local, decentralized ownership and co-creation of social goods and services.

Governments are using the military-industrial complex to reduce citizens' participation in democratic processes, and we must make sure this rollback of civil rights does not become a permanent fixture of life in the post-coronavirus era.

**KUMI NAIDOO** (*@kuminaidoo*) is the founding chair of Africans Rising for Justice, Peace, and Dignity and former secretary-general of Amnesty International.

**We should now be pushing for local, decentralized ownership and co-creation of social goods and services.**

# The Public Good Requires Private Data

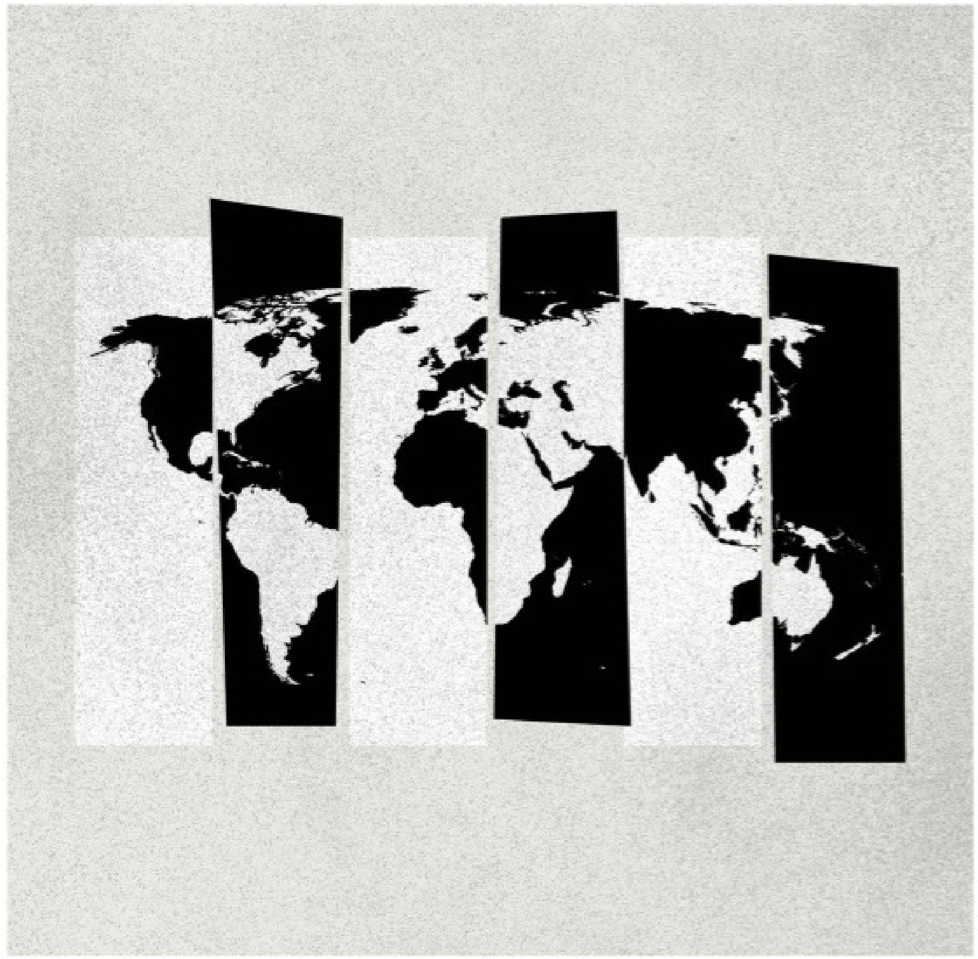
*by* BRUCE SCHNEIER

**THERE HAS BEEN A FUNDAMENTAL BATTLE** in Western societies about the use of personal data, one that pits the individual's right to privacy against the value of that data to all of us collectively. Until now, most of that discussion has focused on surveillance capitalism. For example, Google Maps shows us real-time traffic, but it does so by collecting location data from everyone using the service.

COVID-19 adds a new urgency to the debate and brings in new actors such as public health authorities and the medical sector. It's not just about smartphone apps tracing contacts with infected people that are currently being rolled out by corporations and governments around the world. The medical community will seize the pandemic to boost its case for accessing detailed health data to perform all sorts of research studies. Public health authorities will push for more surveillance in order to get early warning of future pandemics. It's the same trade-off. Individually, the data is very intimate. But collectively, it has enormous value to us all.

Resolving the debate means careful thinking about each case and a moral analysis of how the issues involved affect our core values. The answers for law enforcement, social networks, and medical data won't be the same. As we move toward greater surveillance, we need to figure out how to get the best of both: how to design systems that make use of our data collectively to benefit society as a whole while at the same time protecting people individually. ■

**BRUCE SCHNEIER** is a fellow and lecturer at the Harvard Kennedy School and the author of *Click Here to Kill Everybody: Security and Survival in a Hyper-connected World*.



# Why Race Matters in International Relations

## Western dominance and white privilege permeate the field. It's time to change that. *By Kelebogile Zvobgo and Meredith Loken*

**RACE IS NOT A PERSPECTIVE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS;** it is a central organizing feature of world politics. Anti-Japanese racism guided and sustained U.S. engagement in World War II, and broader anti-Asian sentiment influenced the development and structure of NATO. During the Cold War, racism and anti-communism were inextricably linked in the containment strategy that defined Washington's approach to Africa, Asia, Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. And today race shapes threat perception and responses to violent extremism, inside and outside the global war on terrorism. Yet mainstream international relations (IR) scholarship denies race as essential to understanding the world, to the cost of the field's integrity.

Take the "big three" IR paradigms: realism, liberalism, and constructivism. These dominant frames for understanding

Illustration by FOREIGN POLICY

global politics are built on raced and racist intellectual foundations that limit the field's ability to answer important questions about international security and organization. Core concepts, like anarchy and hierarchy, are *raced*: They are rooted in discourses that center and favor Europe and the West. These concepts implicitly and explicitly pit "developed" against "undeveloped," "modern" against "primitive," "civilized" against "uncivilized." And their use is *racist*: These invented binaries are used to explain subjugation and exploitation around the globe.

While realism and liberalism were built on Eurocentrism and used to justify white imperialism, this fact is not widely acknowledged in the field. For instance, according to neorealists, there exists a "balance of power" between and among "great powers." Most of these great powers are, not incidentally, white-majority states, and they sit atop the hierarchy, with small and notably less white powers organized below them. In a similar vein, raced hierarchies and conceptions of control ground the concept of cooperation in neoliberal thought: Major powers own the proverbial table, set the chairs, and arrange the place settings.

Constructivism, which rounds out the big three approaches, is perhaps best positioned to tackle race and racism. Constructivists reject the as-given condition of anarchy and maintain that anarchy, security, and other concerns are socially constructed based on shared ideas, histories, and experiences. Yet with few notable exceptions, constructivists rarely acknowledge how race shapes what is shared.

Despite the dominance of the big three in the modern study of IR, many of the arguments they advance, such as the balance of power, are not actually supported by evidence outside of modern Europe. Consider the democratic peace theory. The theory makes two key propositions: that democracies are less likely to go to war than are nondemocracies and that democracies are less likely to go to war with each other. The historical record shows that democracies have actually not been less likely to fight wars—if you include their colonial conquests. Meanwhile, in regions such as the Middle East and North Africa, democratizing states have experienced more internal conflicts than their less democratic peers. Yet leaders in the West have invoked democratic peace theory to justify invading and occupying less democratic, and notably less white, countries.

This is a key element of IR's racial exclusion: The state system that IR seeks to explain arises from the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War and established European principles of statehood and sovereignty. Far from 17th-century relics, these principles are enshrined in the United Nations Charter—the foundation for global governance since 1945. But non-European nations did not voluntarily adopt European understandings of statehood and sovereignty, as IR scholars often mythologize. Instead, Europe divided the world between the modern, "civilized" states and those that it did not think belonged in the international system—and then conquered them.

The IR scholar Sankaran Krishna has argued that because IR privileges theorizing over historical description and analysis, the field enables this kind of whitewashing. Western concepts are prioritized at the expense of their applicability in the world. Krishna called this "a systematic politics of forgetting, a willful amnesia, on the question of race."

Importantly, IR has not always ignored race. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, foundational texts invoked race as the linchpin holding together colonial administration and war. Belief in white people's biological and sociological supremacy offered a tidy dualism between the civilized and the savage that justified the former's murderous exploitation of the latter. Paul Samuel Reinsch, a founder of modern IR and foreign policy, christened the 20th century as the "age of national imperialism." He concluded that states endeavor "to increase [their] resources … through the absorption or exploitation of undeveloped regions and inferior races." Yet he assured readers that this was "not inconsistent with respect for … other nationalities" because states avoid exerting control over "highly civilized nations."

Thinkers' attention to race in the late 19th and early 20th centuries spread into academic journals and research institutions. For example, the *Journal of Race Development*—the first academic IR journal, established in 1910—advanced racist treatises, including on the inability of "native races" to develop states without colonialism. Nonetheless, the journal's pages also included sharp critiques from W.E.B. Du Bois and other scholars who were critical of European mercantilism. In 1919, the journal was rebranded as the *Journal of International Relations* without substantive changes, and in 1922, its successor, *Foreign Affairs*, was born.

The mid-20th century brought about some shifts in IR thinking and foreign policy. Black IR scholars, primarily working out of Howard University, developed a strong theoretical tradition that resisted white supremacist privileging of U.S. and European empires. Anti-colonial revolutions in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s further problematized the promise of empire built into realist frameworks and the idealism of paternalist cooperation integral to liberal thought.

Mainstream IR theory, however, did not adapt or evolve its position on race. Most IR scholars just stopped engaging with the subject altogether. Between 1945 and 1993, among the five major IR journals of the period only one published an article with the word "race" in the title. Another four articles included "minorities," and 13 included "ethnicity." Since then, mainstream IR has neglected race in theorizing, in historical explanation, and in prescription

and shuttled race (and gender) to the side as "other perspectives." When IR scholars do engage with race, it is often in discussions of outwardly raced issues such as colonialism.

Yet one cannot comprehend world politics while ignoring race and racism. Textbooks that neglect historical and modern slavery when explaining development and globalization obscure the realities of state-building and deny the harms committed in the process. Similarly, when scholarship fails to call attention to the role that race plays in Western nations' use of international law as a pretext for military intervention, it provides cover for the modern-day equivalent of "civilizing missions." Likewise, studies of trade and dispute settlement almost always overlook modern arbitration's deep roots in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. This history is often lost in analyses of victories and losses in negotiations.

Race and the racism of historical statecraft are inextricable from the modern study and practice of IR. They are also not artifacts: Race continues to shape international and domestic threat perceptions and consequent foreign policy; international responses to immigrants and refugees; and access to health and environmental stability.

Because mainstream IR does not take race or racism seriously, it also does not take diversity and inclusion in the profession seriously. In the United States, which is the largest producer of IR scholarship, only 8 percent of scholars identify as Black or Latino, compared with 12 percent of scholars in comparative politics and 14 percent in U.S. politics. And that's despite the fact that the issues that IR scholars study—such as war, migration, human rights, development, and climate change—have a disproportionate impact on Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color.

There are a number of reasons for this imbalance. First, there is a pervasive and corrosive tendency among white scholars to assume that scholars of color study race, ethnicity, and identity politics in the United States or in an area studies context. Though scholars of color do work in these areas, there is no intellectual reason to expect that they all do so. This tendency to presume, even assign, where different people belong communicates to IR scholars of color that they are not welcome.

The International Studies Association (ISA), the main professional association for IR scholars and practitioners, does not offer a research or conference section on race. Nor do any of its organized sections mention race in their descriptions. While ISA does have several identity-related caucuses, including the Women's Caucus for International Studies, there is no caucus for scholars of color. Scholars of color also experience overt racism within ISA and other professional associations. In 2018, Meg Guliford described her experience as a Black scholar at an ISA conference, where three separate attendees assumed she was hotel staff and one asked when she planned to bring out more food.

How IR is taught also perpetuates the research and professional inequalities we detail above. In a 2014 survey of IR professors, nearly 40 percent reported organizing their courses by the traditional paradigms of IR studies. Since much paradigmatic work is dominated by white men and is guided by Eurocentrism, women, nonwhite people, and issues of race and racism are displaced in course syllabuses.

Interestingly, how professors organize their courses does not necessarily reflect their own approach to studying IR. In that same survey, 26 percent of respondents reported that they did not use paradigmatic analysis. This casts even more doubt on the paradigms as core, yet exclusionary, frameworks.

IR scholars cannot cast off the field's intellectual history. But neither can scholars accept it uncritically. Western dominance and white privilege permeate IR scholarship, teaching, and professional associations, to the cost of the field's integrity and to the cost of the relevance and appropriateness of scholars' advice to policymakers. To help remedy these problems, IR scholars should focus their efforts on three initiatives.

First, those who teach IR must address race and racism in the field and acknowledge the usefulness of critical approaches. This means integrating scholarly works on race in undergraduate and graduate courses, not as a segregated "week on race" at the end of the term. Despite the field's overarching exclusion in this area, there are excellent scholars working on race in IR, such as Robbie Shilliam, Adom Getachew, and Audie Klotz.

Introductory courses could also be organized around issues—for instance, interstate conflict, human rights, and environmental politics—in order to create more points of entry for relevant scholarship and for nonwhite students.

Second, universities must improve representation among scholars and increase diversity in intellectual thought. IR programs should strive to recruit, train, and retain diverse graduate and faculty candidates who can offer new perspectives and drive innovation. Third, IR professional associations must become more inclusive. One concrete step would be for ISA and other IR hubs to organize sections on race.

These steps are straightforward and feasible. Those in positions of power and influence must simply have the will and do the work. ■

**KELEBOGILE ZVOBGO** (*@kelly_zvobgo*) is the founder and director of the International Justice Lab at the College of William & Mary and a Ph.D. candidate in political science and international relations at the University of Southern California. **MEREDITH LOKEN** (*@meredithloken*) is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a nonresident fellow with the Modern War Institute at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.



U.S. President Donald Trump addresses troops at Miramar Marine Corp Air Station in San Diego on March 13, 2018.

SANDY HUFFAKER/GETTY IMAGES

# Defund the Police, Then Defund the Military

Democrats used to have a clearer agenda for cracking down on an out-of-control military. They should bring it back. *By Noah Berlatsky*

F**OLLOWING THE BRUTAL POLICE KILLING OF GEORGE FLOYD** in Minneapolis in late May, activists and protesters are calling on the government to "defund the police." The Minneapolis City Council has declared its intention to do exactly that. But national Democratic pundits and elected officials have been wary of adopting the idea. Joe Biden, the presumptive Democratic presidential nominee, has opposed defunding the police; so has his erstwhile primary opponent Sen. Bernie Sanders.

But throttling cash flows to harmful institutions isn't a new idea on the left or for Democrats. For decades, Democrats and the left called for the defunding of the military in much the same terms as protesters and activists are now calling for the defunding of the police. "Defund the military" has, it's true, largely been abandoned as a high-profile strategy by both mainstream Democrats and the anti-war left. But it's a useful precedent for thinking about what defunding the police means and the benefits it can bring. In turn, slashing the budgets of militarized police forces could reinvigorate calls to cut the bloated budget of a military that had ambitions to be a global police officer.

In the 1960s and '70s, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, a venerable anti-war organization, printed a famously popular bumper sticker declaring: "It will be a great day when our schools get all the money they need and the Air Force has to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber." As with "defund the police," this is not just a slogan—it's a political philosophy and a political argument.

The organization was pointing out that prioritizing the military and war means deprioritizing the resources that make peace possible, like education. In the same vein, Black Lives Matter and the American Civil Liberties Union have called to defund the police in order to redirect money to mental health services and investments in Black communities—for example, in schools. Police officers themselves have pointed out how they've become a service of last resort, struggling to deal with the

fallout of austerity elsewhere. In 2017, for example, Chicago spent more than 38 percent of its budget on police, and Minneapolis spent more than 35 percent. The New York City post-coronavirus budget for fiscal year 2021 includes $2 billion in cuts across education, housing, health, and other services, while the police's $6 billion budget is being slashed by only 0.3 percent.

Meanwhile, in 2012, then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel in Chicago shuttered six city-run mental health clinics, contributing to long wait times for services that continue today. As with other closures, that has left police as de facto mental health crisis providers, a job they're poorly trained for. People with severe mental illness are involved in 25 to 50 percent of fatal encounters with law enforcement, even though they make up only about 3 percent of U.S. adults.

For Democrats, constraining military budgets in order to invest in social services was once a mainstream position, not a fringe one.

While the Democrats were on the whole the party that supported large military budgets in the 1950s, that changed in the '60s. President Lyndon B. Johnson clearly articulated the danger of military funding and military priorities: "If I left the woman I really loved—the Great Society—in order to get involved with that bitch of a war on the other side of the world, then I would lose everything at home. All my programs. All my hopes to feed the hungry and shelter the homeless."

Johnson ultimately chose the war anyway, blighting his hopes for social transformation and his political prospects. But, in part in reaction to that disaster, at least some Democrats in the 1970s and '80s called for major cuts in defense spending and tried to restrain military budgets. California Sen. Alan Cranston warned that "we have to make sure we're only investing in military matters what is really needed." In 1990, Georgia Sen. Sam Nunn proposed $255 billion in defense cuts over a five-year period. Colorado Rep. Pat Schroeder repeatedly worked for military cuts, trying to defund some of President Ronald Reagan's priorities such as the MX mobile weapons system and the B-1 bomber.

These Democrats were hardly radicals. Nunn was careful to warn that he didn't want to cut too much too quickly. In one of her attacks on the Defense Department, Schroeder compared defense contractors to "welfare queens," implicitly accepting the racist Reagan-era demonization of the poor. But the fact that Nunn and Schroeder were not leftists is the point. Taking money away from violent institutions in order to invest in nonviolent solutions has plenty of precedent, because it's rooted in common sense. Democratic leaders like Biden could embrace that precedent, rather than proposing another $300 million for police departments that have already seen their budgets bloat by 445 percent between 1982 and 2007.

In turn, "defund the police" could serve to reinvigorate an anti-war program that has had trouble gaining traction in the United States in the last few years.

Democrats have largely abandoned even token efforts to rein in defense budgets. The anti-war left pushed hard for Sanders and his anti-war platform. But after his defeat, it will need an approach other than presidential politics, at least for the near term.

At least one of those approaches should be to defund the military. Activists have long criticized the Section 1033 provision of the 1997 National Defense Authorization Act, which allows the transfer of tactical military equipment to police departments so that police can confront protesters and civilians with terrifying Mine-Resistant Ambush-Protected vehicles and heavily armed SWAT teams. Hawaii Sen. Brian Schatz has proposed ending Section 1033.

But this could also be a moment to ask why the military is so glutted with surplus equipment in the first place. One way to prevent the military from belching tanks and ammunition onto U.S. streets would be to stop pouring money into the military in the first place. A leaner military would force U.S. leaders to think more clearly and carefully about the use of force and its economic as well as moral and reputational costs.

The military also directly benefits from, and relies on, domestic disinvestment and poverty. The armed services focus recruitment efforts on lower-middle-class and poor households; as of 2004, almost two-thirds of recruits in the U.S. Army came from counties in which the median household income was below the countrywide median. The Army remains one of the few ways in the United States for the working class to get universal health care and a free college education.

Governments skimp on social services and education spending in poor and minority communities. They spend lavishly on police who stop and harass Black people in those neighborhoods with terrifying frequency. And then the well-funded military sets up recruiting stations in poor neighborhoods to fill its ranks, as young people with few other options sign up to go shoot others and be shot at in turn in endless foreign wars.

The United States spends about $115 billion on policing a year, more than any other country's military budget save China's. It spends $732 billion on the military, which is more than the next 10 highest-spending countries combined. Economic choices are moral choices. Activists and protesters calling to defund the police are trying to remind Americans that funneling money to people with guns and tanks is a choice, not an inevitability. Mainstream critics of U.S. defense spending once understood that. They should take up the call again. Defund the police. Defund the military. Fund peace, equality, and hope. ■

**NOAH BERLATSKY** (*@nberlat*) is a freelance writer based in Chicago.

# insights

## The Diplomat Who Came in From the Cold

### How Thae Yong-ho went from North Korean ambassador to South Korean politician.

*By Melissa Chan*

**PROFILE**

PORTRAITS OF GLOBAL CHANGEMAKES

**FEW SOUTH KOREAN POLITICIANS SHOW** Thae Yong-ho's sartorial flair. The recently elected South Korean legislator will regularly appear in a dark fedora hat, a gray suit with a white shirt, tortoiseshell sunglasses—which he keeps on indoors—and a luxury Salvatore Ferragamo or Hermès tie checkered with an African menagerie print of giraffes, zebras, and spotted panthers. Thae dresses with the pride of a man who knows he has arrived. The cosmopolitan politician speaks fluent English and Chinese in addition to his native Korean.

For a regular South Korean official, all this would be unusual enough. For a man raised in one of the most closed dictatorships on Earth, and who spent more than three decades as a senior diplomat for Pyongyang before becoming one of the highest-ranking defectors in 2016, it is extraordinary. In April, he made history as the first North Korean directly elected to South Korea's legislature—just four years after he fled. And if North Korea ever reconciles with its neighbor—whether through collapse or diplomacy—it may be trailblazers like Thae who play a key role in any rapprochement.

"In half a century, nobody of his caliber has defected," said Andrei Lankov, the director of Korea Risk Group, a research firm. "We have probably the first North Korean who can be described as a politician independent from the North Korean state."

After encountering many communist apparatchiks in the course of my reporting, from China to Cuba, I was cautious when I met Thae. People who've succeeded in that kind of system tend to be ruthless, inscrutable, and pay you lip service for what they think you want to hear. You don't know what they really believe in. They carry the coldness of survivors who've worked their way up an unforgiving system.

Thae was none of the above, and well before his time in the South, he impressed and charmed many of the people he met. In North Korea, he came from a family with good revolutionary credentials, though not particularly elite. He did well after college and served as a diplomat overseas. He worked in Denmark during the awful famine years, with the unenviable task of procuring luxury European goods for the Kim family while appealing for help to the World Food Program to feed the rest of his country. In London, he bargain-hunted for real estate to set up the embassy at its new location on a quiet suburban street. In his free time, he made foreign friends and took up tennis and golf. Unusually, he'd gained the trust of his superiors back home so much that they granted him the rare exception of bringing his wife and sons along during his tour. That would prove critical for Thae and his decision to escape.

Other defectors have served and will serve in South Korea's National Assembly: Cho Myeong-cheol in 2012 and Ji Seong-ho this term. But both were nominated by their parties rather than running directly for a seat—the South Korean system mixes proportional representation with directly elected

JEENAH MOON/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX PICTURES



representatives. Neither had to campaign and appeal to South Korean voters as Thae did.

Prejudice in the country against former North Koreans runs deep, with defectors often accused of being spies. For most North Koreans, liberation has its share of trauma, with many finding it hard to adjust to South Korea's fierce job market and intense democracy.

Most defectors flee for economic reasons. After a lifetime of ideological indoctrination, they care little for politics. They are predominantly middle-aged women with limited education, often from one of the border towns near China. Once free, they struggle to adjust, living in poverty and working for low wages. Shunted to the periphery of South Korean society, this group has not had a voice.

On the surface, Thae shares little in common with them, but he told me, "I consider myself North Korean"—he means his sensibility, even if he has successfully adapted to being a citizen of South Korea. "My way of thinking is mostly in the North Korean way," he said. Thae knows the world the refugee community left and understands the bewildering feeling they have in their new home.

But Thae in his dapper ensembles—or sporting the pink jackets of his United Future Party (UFP)—looks every part the modern South Korean man. He won in Gangnam, the affluent Seoul district made famous by the K-pop star Psy's hit song. He had become a household name by the time he launched his campaign this year—a celebrity with a bestselling memoir and a North Korea expert, frequently quoted in media. As he celebrated his win and supporters sang the national anthem, Thae broke down into tears. "I can't believe that it is real," he said. "One day in the future," he added, "I'm sure that North Korean people will adopt the same method of an election process." He had officially run as Thae Ku-min, a pseudonym he first used in the early days of his defection. It was symbolic. It translates to "saving the people," and he had North Koreans in mind. He has pledged that he will advocate for their needs, particularly for more funding for vocational job training and other forms of social assistance. He does not want them treated like second-class citizens.

"Just raising the issue and talking about it, raising public awareness, is the key thing that he can do," said Sue Mi Terry, a senior fellow for Korea at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former CIA analyst. Last November, Thae attacked the government for its repatriation of two North Korean defectors. They were accused of murdering their fishing crew, and the public had little sympathy for them. Thae deplored their handover back to the North where they faced certain death, arguing that they should at least face trial in South Korea. He points to that incident as his wake-up call to jump into politics.

Thae has said his primary motivation for defecting was for the sake of his children, so he could have melted away into safe anonymity after he escaped with his family. He fled a regime fond of dramatic assassinations of those it views as traitors or threats, including the murder of Kim Jong Un's half-brother, Kim Jong Nam, at the airport in Kuala Lumpur with a nerve agent. "He is probably number one on their assassination list," Lankov said.

Not tall, Thae walks into a room in an unassuming manner, but he draws the eye because of the big men in suits circling around to guard him. At the Oslo Freedom Forum last year, an attacker managed to get past his protective ring to toss a milkshake at him outside a hotel. For a few moments, people panicked, assuming it was poison. It turned out the protester was a local leftist activist, and it was really just a milkshake. The incident, however, demonstrated how easy an assassination would be. It did not scare him into silence. Thae clearly wants to matter and in a very public way.

**Thae's normalization into South Korean politics also conveys a powerful message to possible future defectors—that refugee integration is possible.**

"Maybe I would appear every night on TV," he told me last year, fantasizing about a day when the two countries might unify. He would explain South Korean life to his compatriots. "I may play a kind of role bridging the North and South." For him, reconciliation is not a question of if but when. South Korean politicians speak about unification in lofty but abstract terms. Thae thinks Seoul needs far more concrete plans—from handling the North's military to education to health care—for that eventuality. "There is no preparation at all," he said. However system collapse plays out, decades of militant propaganda against the South will mean that someone like Thae may be one of the few figures North Koreans would trust and simultaneously one of the authorities South Korean leadership would turn to for policy advice. As long as he manages to avoid assassination, Thae is in a valuable, possibly indispensable spot.

What makes his hawkish position on North Korea different is his history. His criticism of President Moon Jae-in's détente was one reason why the UFP, the conservative opposition, supported his candidacy. Among parties, Thae had few options. The alternative would have been Moon's Democratic Party, and Thae views its policy on North Korea as appeasement. The UFP welcomed the name recognition Thae brought, along with his anti-Kim credentials. Yet he is more nuanced than most other members of the right when



Thae speaks to the media after securing a majority vote in his Gangnam constituency on behalf of the United Future Party during South Korea's parliamentary elections, in Seoul on April 16.



it comes to Pyongyang. Many conservatives insist on zero engagement until a total collapse of the regime.

"The question is to which extent he will be able to express his opinions, which will seriously differ from what is the politically correct group think of the South Korean right," Lankov said. Where the conservatives see an enemy, Thae sees millions of oppressed fellow citizens.

His victory not only has the potential to benefit current defectors or reinvigorate the South's political conversation on the North. Thae's normalization into South Korean politics also conveys a powerful message to his former colleagues—possible future defectors—that refugee integration is possible.

"One of the reasons the North Korean regime survives—one of its pillars of stability—is elite support," Terry explained. Thae's victory proves that there is "an alternative pathway for them that can safeguard their survival. Thae's election shows that North Korean defectors are not only welcome in South Korea but they are now part of South Korea's leadership."

Until the recent election, North Korean elites may have hated Kim's brutal rule, but they tolerated it out of self-preservation because they believed they had no better options. Thae has said he hopes they've been tracking his progress, to "watch and understand how democracy works." His success challenges the North's prevailing narrative, even if the reality is that his triumph is unlikely to be easily replicated by other defectors. Thae's victory may spur Kim to make an example of him. "If they are determined, they can do it," Lankov said.

Meanwhile, Thae begins his new political life in South Korea and continues to win friends and allies with his energy and forthrightness. If he's putting up a front, it's been quite a show. He exudes charisma. He engages in questions with enthusiasm and care. Once he sets his sunglasses aside, you catch his curious eyes. At the same conference where he thought he might have been milkshake-murdered, he spent his free time attending the other panels and workshops, at one point peering into the session on LGBTQ rights, later listening attentively to an evangelist about the power of bitcoin. He is a smart man making up for lost time.

His clothes may have changed, but he still feels out of place in South Korea. ("I'm not good at using these smartphones," he confessed to me at one point. "You have to remember a lot of passwords.") Neither does he idolize his new country. When it comes to defectors' struggles, he observes that "North Korean people are freed from North Korea's slavery system but they become another slave of South Korean capitalism." He may represent a district of fiscal conservatives who demand lower taxes, but it doesn't preclude him from seeing things with eyes wide open.

In many ways, his positive disposition can surprise interviewers. It doesn't reflect the strange, creepy life he led—of North Korea's Juche ("self-reliance") ideology in years of horrendous famine or of colleagues who would occasionally disappear, presumably to some prison camp, no questions asked. He seems too good to be true: a realist who worked his way up North Korean bureaucracy, a dreamer who defected and took the brave path to run for office.

"I have to believe that he's committed to his cause," Terry said, when I asked about his authenticity. Thae, once an eloquent spokesperson for the Kim dynasty, now speaks with equal passion about freedom: "I want North Koreans to understand and see the democratic process through me. That is my main purpose." ■

**MELISSA CHAN** (*@melissakchan*) is a national and foreign affairs reporter who has written for FOREIGN POLICY, *Al Jazeera*, the *New York Times*, *Deutsche Welle*, and others.




# How Muscle Works in Moscow

## To flourish in today's Russia takes having friends—the kind who protect you.

*By Amy Mackinnon*

**ON OCT. 7, 2006, THE RUSSIAN JOURNALIST ANNA POLITKOVSKAYA** was spending an unremarkable Saturday afternoon running errands. When she arrived home, she took what groceries she could carry out of her car and up to her seventh-floor apartment before heading back downstairs for the rest. As the elevator reached the ground floor and the doors shuddered open, a man in a baseball cap stepped forward and shot the 48-year-old dead. The person who ordered her assassination has never been found, but there's little doubt about why someone might have wanted her dead. Politkovskaya spent years exposing human rights abuses, corruption, and the misuse of power. It is a beat that has proved lethal for many Russian journalists—particularly for those such as Politkovskaya who had no *krysha*, or protection, from the violent political underbelly of post-Soviet Russia.

**DECODER**

INTERPRETING THE ESSENTIAL WORDS THAT HELP EXPLAIN THE WORLD

In Russian, krysha literally means "roof," but the word took on a second meaning in the late 1980s. Protection from the elements, yes, but also from the organized criminals who flourished as the Soviet state collapsed in on itself. And like Russia, the concept of krysha has evolved dramatically since the end of the Cold War. Its trajectory charts the evolution of power in Russia as the gangsterism of the 1990s was brought to heel, making way for the political violence of President Vladimir Putin's rule in the 21st century.

**THE CONCEPT OF KRYSHA FLOURISHED** in the late 1980s after Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev signed a law allowing for the creation of worker-owned cooperatives. But these businesses became easy pickings for predatory protection



Illustration by ILYA BAZHANOV

rackets; criminal gangs took as much as a 30 percent cut of profits, and in return people got to keep their businesses—and their legs—intact. It was essentially, "We will protect you against us," said Mark Galeotti, an expert on Russian organized crime and the author of *The Vory: Russia's Super Mafia*. Former athletes of the Soviet Union's prestigious sports clubs and young traumatized veterans of the Soviet war in Afghanistan were often hired to do "customer-facing" parts of the deals, Galeotti said. The athletes came to be known as *kachki*, from the Russian word meaning to pump your muscles.

The collapse of the paternalistic Soviet state gave rise to a Hobbesian free market. Memories of the so-called wild 1990s are seared into the Russian collective memory. Everything was for sale. Desperate pensioners pawned the few possessions they had in crude roadside markets while hulking state enterprises were sold off through a disastrous scheme of voucher privatization, which saw whole swaths of industry, and much of the country's wealth, brought under the control of just a handful of individuals.

As the state's monopoly on the use of force began to crumble, criminal gangs became guarantors of safety and providers of a kind of justice. With private industry on the rise, krysha provided a steady stream of income for criminal gangs—a more reliable one than risky criminal activities like robbery. Racketeers became more invested in the success of the businesses they protected. Described as "violent entrepreneurs" by the Russian sociologist Vadim Volkov, gangs increasingly offered a broad array of support services to those under their krysha: assistance in navigating the fiendish state bureaucracy, dispute resolution, contract enforcement, loans, and the creation of problems for rival businesses. In the absence of a functioning police or court system, the protection offered by gangs was welcomed by many business owners. "It was something people trusted, more than the state," said Yuliya Zabyelina, an assistant professor of political science at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice. In the lawlessness of the 1990s, it was almost impossible for a business to survive without hired muscle.

**As power in Russia became more centralized, so too has the concept of krysha, taking on a more political connotation.**

Businesspeople were discerning about who provided their krysha. A good krysha was judged by its size and influence relative to its competitors. "Less powerful criminal groups would seek to align themselves with more powerful criminal groups, who in turn were more likely to obtain their own krysha from corrupt government officials," Klaus von Lampe writes in his 2015 book, *Organized Crime: Analyzing Illegal Activities, Criminal Structures, and Extra-legal Governance*.

A good krysha provided not only protection but also opportunity. Even in the chaos of the 1990s, the concept was not confined to the world of violent gangsters. In a $6.5 billion court battle between the Russian oligarchs Roman Abramovich and Boris Berezovsky, the former claimed to have paid $2 billion over several years to Berezovsky, an influential power broker who had President Boris Yeltsin's ear, for access to the lucrative privatizations of the energy industry. (Berezovsky denied that there had been any krysha arrangements and said the payments were his share of the profits from Abramovich's oil company, in which he held a 25 percent stake.) Nor was the term exclusive to Russia. "In Ukraine, krysha is very important if you want to understand how corrupt relationships are structured and maintained," Zabyelina said.

By the turn of the millennium, the gangsterism of the 1990s was in decline. When Putin assumed the presidency in a very staged handoff from the ailing Yeltsin in 1999, it became clear he would brook no challenge to the state's authority. Many gang members were killed or imprisoned. Other residents of the Russian underworld managed to use their connections to maneuver their businesses into semi-legitimacy.

Under Putin, Russia entered a period of long-craved stability and prosperity, and the lawlessness of the 1990s faded. "Most businesspeople nowadays are not going to encounter organized crime. If they're going to find predators, it's going to be the fire marshal or, you know, someone in the mayor's office rather than anything else," Galeotti said. As power in Russia became more centralized, so too has the concept of krysha, taking on a more political connotation; the assumption is that one's source of protection must be a personal connection in the state or someone closely connected to it. When bumbling politicians inexplicably continue to hold onto their jobs, or businesses score lucrative government contracts, it sets off speculation about which powerful official or influential oligarch is protecting them.

Krysha continues to take on new meanings in Russia today. The opposition activist Alexei Navalny and his Anti-Corruption Foundation have published several embarrassing investigations into the unexplained wealth of senior Russian officials, encouraging thousands of young Russians to take to the streets to protest against the government. To challenge powerful figures and remain alive in modern Russia is unusual, as Politkovskaya's fate attests. But for Russians, Navalny's good fortune is not a mystery—it's only a question of which powerful figures are protecting him and why. ■

**AMY MACKINNON** (*@ak_mack*) is a staff writer at FOREIGN POLICY.

# Crises Only Sometimes Lead to Change. Here's Why.

**Great upheavals spark serious reform when the reformers have a plan—and the power to implement it.**

*by* **SHERI BERMAN**

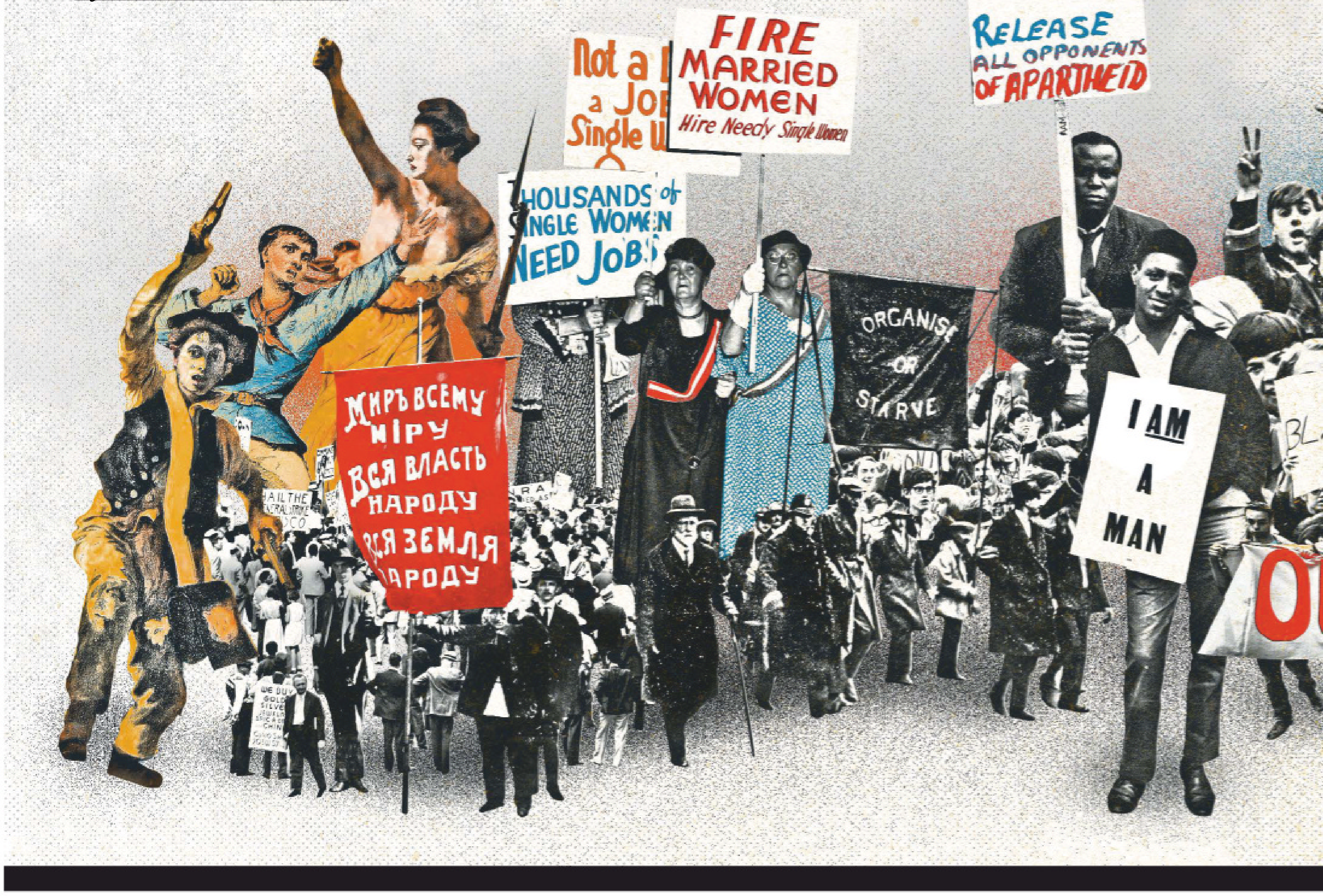





Illustration by MAXOMATIC

**THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC** has upended Western economies, many of which are now facing their gravest crises since the Great Depression. In response, governments are taking unprecedented measures.

In the United States, the crisis has produced an expansion of big government programs unparalleled in peacetime: massive stimulus measures, a historic expansion of unemployment benefits, a temporary basic income for many citizens, billions of dollars in funding for public health measures, low or zero-interest loans to businesses, and more. In addition, the U.S. Federal Reserve is engaged in an experiment with modern monetary theory—previously considered "voodoo economics" by mainstream economists—promising to pump unlimited amounts of money into the economy.

In Europe, governments have implemented even more dramatic measures, as economists such as Martin Sandbu urge them to "throw caution to the wind and spend massively." Germany has given up its obsession with balanced budgets. In France, President Emmanuel Macron suspended many taxes, rent, and household bills and promised no company would be allowed to collapse. Scandinavian countries and the United Kingdom have essentially nationalized payrolls, promising to cover the wages of workers who would otherwise be laid off.

The assumption that the crisis and the radical measures undertaken in response to it will shape the world for years to come and forever alter the world order, as Yuval Noah Harari and Henry Kissinger respectively put it, has become commonplace. As the other essays in this issue make clear, many hope—or believe—that the crisis and the responses to it will enable governments to deal with many long-standing problems, from climate change to inequality.

Many progressives in particular seem to believe that the world is at the dawn of a new era, perhaps even more now that protests against racial injustice have been added to the upheaval caused by the pandemic. The "era of small government is over," declared the *New York Times* columnist Jamelle Bouie. After the coronavirus, "ambitious progressive ideas that once seemed implausible ... start to become more imaginable," argued his *Times* colleague Michelle Goldberg. We must rethink "the basic assumptions underlying the American value system," asserted former Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders. A belief in the inevitability, or at least necessity, of transformative change has characterized the European left as well. The crisis is neoliberalism's *Götterdämmerung*, proclaimed a headline in Germany's leading left-wing newspaper, referring to the final destruction and subsequent renewal of the world famously portrayed in Richard Wagner's opera about an apocalyptic battle. But transformation is never preordained.

Will the current crisis and the responses to it fundamentally transform economies, governments, societies, and the relationship among them? Is the world, as many believe or hope, at a turning point in history?

**ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS** requires distinguishing between crises and transformation. It is easy to assume that crises trigger the collapse of an existing order and its replacement by a new one. But this view is fundamentally flawed, most obviously because it does not fit the historical record. Crises are fairly common; fundamental transformations are rare.

As Leon Trotsky, one of history's great revolutionaries, wrote in 1932: The "mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection; if it were, the masses would be always in revolt." Instead, he argued, "it is necessary that the bankruptcy of the social regime, being conclusively revealed, should make these privations intolerable." And only at that point, he maintained, could "new conditions and new ideas ... open the prospect of a revolutionary way out."

Trotsky, like all revolutionaries, understood that some crises lead to lasting transformation while others do not. And history provides lessons for those who believe or hope that this crisis will be one of those that does.

The first is that during periods of rapid change and uncertainty it is easier to be directed by events than to direct them—and it is easier to generate discontent against an old order than consensus for a new one. Concretely, this means that the key determinants of whether crises and discontent trigger transformation are political: In particular, planning and power are necessary. Without agreed-on plans for what sort of new order should replace the old one, opposition movements easily collapse into infighting, and discontent often peters out. And if such plans are not championed by a political force with the power to implement them, good ideas can remain footnotes to history, and the status quo can stumble on.

Take 1848, when uprisings fueled by massive discontent against existing monarchical dictatorships exploded across Europe and other parts of the globe. As the historian Eric Hobsbawm observed, few revolutions in history "spread more rapidly and widely, running like a brushfire across frontiers, countries and even oceans." Indeed, within months, dictatorships that seemed completely secure crumbled under the onslaught of massive popular mobilizations.

But almost as soon as dictatorships began collapsing, divisions among the discontented came to the fore. Middle-class liberals wanted political and economic liberalization but opposed mass enfranchisement and anything smacking of socialism, while workers and others on the left demanded full democratization and structural economic reforms. Meanwhile, freed from the shackles of dictatorship, various ethnic groups demanded control over their fates and territories but were often unwilling to recognize the rights of other groups to do the same.

In short, once the old order began collapsing, the lack of agreed-on plans for what should replace it led revolutionary groups to begin fighting among themselves, enabling supporters of the old order to buy some off and crush the rest. Quickly, dictatorships returned to virtually

PREVIOUS PAGE PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

every place from which they had disappeared. Historians, accordingly, often refer to 1848 as "the turning point at which history failed to turn."

Between 1918 and 1939, another such pattern unfolded in Europe. However, the expectation that crisis would inevitably bring transformation everywhere was naive—and leftists' hopes for revolutionary change on their terms were quashed once again. In some countries, interwar crises did not lead history to turn. In others, they did—but in dramatically different directions depending on which politicians and parties had the plans and power to make this happen.

World War I killed millions of people, ended an era of growth and globalization, and brought a flu pandemic, massive unemployment, and hyperinflation in its wake. Before countries could recuperate, the Great Depression hit, causing an explosion of dissatisfaction with capitalism and the status quo more generally.

In most countries, however, the left was unable to unify around a plan in response to the Depression. Communists wanted to use the crisis to bury capitalism and democracy. Traditional socialists, influenced by Marxism, viewed capitalism as impossible to fundamentally reform and so did nothing. Only social democrats believed the crisis provided the perfect opportunity to transform the relationship between governments, economies, and societies.

In France, not only the left but also the right was unable to unite around transformative plans in response to the Great Depression and the more general dissatisfaction pervading French society. The result was continued political drift and polarization and a country left weak and vulnerable to Nazi assault.

**Without plans for what sort of new order should replace the old one, opposition movements easily collapse into infighting, and discontent peters out.**

In a few places, such as the United States and Sweden, leftist parties did champion a social democratic Depression-fighting strategy, and progressive economic and political transformations occurred. In other countries, the left's infighting and inaction facilitated the ability of fascists to exploit the Depression, and reactionary economic and political transformations occurred instead.

The clearest and most consequential example of this was Germany. During the Depression, Communists increased their attacks on the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the largest left party and the bulwark of German democracy, and joined with the Nazis in strikes, uprisings, and political maneuvers designed to hasten the Weimar Republic's demise.

The SPD, meanwhile, despite the clamoring of its supporters and the rest of German society for an activist response to the catastrophe befalling them, remained largely on the sidelines. Its leaders rejected plans put forward by social democratic reformers for a Keynesian-type response to the Depression, which called for government spending and other programs to actively fight the economic downturn in general and unemployment in particular.

Stymied by Marxists, who insisted any reform of capitalism was pointless, the party's leadership believed, as its main economic theorist Rudolf Hilferding put it, that an "offensive economic policy" would be ineffective because the ultimate arbiter of developments was the "logic of capitalism." The frustrated union leader Fritz Tarnow summed up the dilemmas of the SPD's stance in the following manner:

> Are we standing at the sickbed of capitalism not only as doctors who want to heal the patient but also as prospective heirs who can't wait for the end and would gladly help the process along with a little poison? ... We are damned, I think, to be doctors who seriously want to cure, and yet we have to maintain the feeling that we are heirs who wish to receive the entire legacy of the capitalist system today rather than tomorrow. This double role, doctor and heir, is a damned difficult task.

The Nazis, on the other hand, had no time for healing the dying old order. They recognized the opportunity the crisis presented: a chance to inherit power. Adolf Hitler responded vigorously to the Depression, attacking the SPD and advocates of liberal democracy more generally for their passivity and inability to respond to widespread suffering.

In the 1928 elections, before the Depression hit, the National Socialist German Workers' Party received only 2.6 percent of the vote. Four years later, in the campaign leading up to crucial elections in July 1932, the Nazi Party ran on an economic platform that promised to "solve the problem of unemployment," conquer the Depression, and restructure the economy to serve "the people." The elections made the Nazis the largest party in Germany. Within six months, they were burying the Weimar Republic. Although there are many reasons for fascism's success in Germany and other parts of Europe, the Nazis' ability to take advantage of a crisis, and the left's inability to do so, was critical.

**IN CONTRAST TO 1918,** after 1945 a progressive transformation occurred across Western Europe. The tragedy of the interwar years and the Great Depression

led to a unified belief on both sides of the Atlantic that a new order capable of ensuring economic prosperity and social stability was necessary for democracy to succeed in Europe. This consensus led to extraordinary efforts to change political and economic dynamics at the international, regional, and domestic levels.

The United States helped construct new international security and economic orders to promote the peace and prosperity necessary for postwar democratic success. At the regional level, a process of European integration began, spurred by a recognition that democratic success required overcoming challenges too great to be achieved by the uncoordinated efforts of national governments acting alone. And at the domestic level, European center-left and center-right parties agreed on the need for a new order and social contract between governments and citizens, with the former committed to promoting growth and protecting the latter from capitalism's downsides. Both the mainstream left and right recognized that such a transformation would be necessary to avoid the economic crises and political extremism that doomed democracy during the interwar period.

This order worked remarkably well until the 1970s, when a combination of rising inflation, increasing unemployment, and slow growth created an opportunity for another transformation. During the proceeding decades, neoliberals in groups like the Mont Pelerin Society and the Chicago and Virginia schools of economics and political economy had been thinking about what they saw as the downsides of the postwar order and what should replace it. When problems and discontent emerged in the 1970s, they were therefore prepared with a narrative of the old order's failures as well as plans for a new one.

As Milton Friedman, an intellectual godfather of this movement, put it, "Only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable." Friedman understood what the left didn't grasp: Neoliberal ideas were implemented because they became embedded within the economics profession, think tanks, and international organizations as well as championed by powerful political leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher.

Interestingly, when this neoliberal order experienced its own crisis in 2008, no significant economic shift occurred, despite an initial widespread assumption, even by conservatives like France's then-president, Nicolas Sarkozy, that the era of neoliberalism was over. That problems and discontent did not lead to the end of an old order and the rise of a new one was at least partially a consequence, as the *Economist* put it, of the left's inability "to capitalise on an economic crisis tailor-made for critics of the free market."

A key reason why the left was unable to do this, and therefore play the same transformative role its neoliberal predecessors had played a few decades earlier, was that it was divided and unprepared. During the previous decades, some parts of the left—epitomized by Tony Blair's British Labour Party, Gerhard Schröder's SPD, and Bill Clinton's Democrats—had become content with a technocratic management of capitalism, forgetting that it was constantly evolving and inherently dangerous. Others on the left stopped focusing on capitalism entirely during the late 20th and early 21st centuries, turning their attention instead to intellectual currents such as postmodernism, multiculturalism, feminism, and postcolonialism, which were cultural rather than economic in nature. Thus, when the crisis hit in 2008, the left lacked a coherent narrative of the existing order's problems as well as convincing plans for transforming it.

**THE SAME PROBLEM—AN INABILITY TO CAPITALIZE ON A CRISIS**—could arise once again today unless those committed to creating a more just and egalitarian society heed the lessons of the past.

Figuring out whether the United States and wealthy European countries are on the cusp of a fundamental transformation of their economies, governments, societies, and the relationship among them requires looking beyond the severity of the current crisis and the unprecedented measures already taken in response to it. As history makes clear, crises create opportunities for change—but not all opportunities are seized.

Whether today's left seizes the current opportunity and this period becomes a historical turning point in a progressive direction—rather than another instance of a decaying old order being patched up and hobbling on—will depend on whether those favoring transformation are able to avoid the mistakes made by their predecessors in 1848, the 1930s, and 2008 and are able to unite around convincing critiques of the old order and plans for a new one as well as turn widespread discontent into a powerful coalition in favor of transformative change.

For progressives, there are potentially positive signs. There are more useful transformative ideas lying around than there were a decade ago. In the realm of economic thinking, for example, scholars like Thomas Piketty, Emmanuel Saez, Gabriel Zucman, Mariana Mazzucato, Adam Tooze, Anne Case, and Angus Deaton have risen to the forefront of debate over the past years, highlighting problems with the existing economic order as well as developing potential responses to them.

At the same time, progressive think tanks like the Roosevelt Institute and the Washington Center for Equitable Growth have been developing and disseminating plans for long-term structural change. Even before the remarkable outpouring of protests spurred by the killing of George Floyd, there had been a surge in mass mobilization over the past decade. As the political scientist Erica Chenoweth and her colleagues have documented,

the period from 2010 to 2019 "saw more mass movements demanding radical change around the world" than in any period since World War II.

History teaches us that new ideas and the mobilization of discontent are necessary but not sufficient to trigger transformation. Ideas need to be forged into coherent critiques of the old order as well as attractive, viable plans for a new one. And advocates of change need to unite around such plans to help protect against infighting, the dissipation of discontent, and pushback from defenders of the status quo. Only then can they gain and maintain the power necessary to implement plans for long-term change.

The right has understood this better than the left over the past decades. Neoliberals like Friedman were successful in shifting understandings of the practical relationship between markets, governments, and societies during the late 20th century because they had a clear sense of the new order they wanted to create and were able to get their ideas adopted by scholars, policymakers, and politicians who could implement them.

Even after the financial crisis, which was widely attributed to neoliberalism's failings, supporters of the status quo were able to thwart fundamental change. In the United States, for example, many of then-President Barack Obama's key advisors were not interested in transformative change and remained preoccupied with patching up the old order. To return to the German analogy used by the SPD's Tarnow during the Great Depression, they were primarily interested in being "doctors" rather than "heirs."

**New ideas and the mobilization of discontent are necessary but not sufficient to trigger transformation.**

And any potentially progressive aspects of the administration's crisis package were limited in scope and duration by conservatives, who disseminated a narrative that transformed Obama's rescue of the economy into a tale of government waste and elite bailouts. Meanwhile, the Tea Party movement further transformed the Republican Party into a unified force devoted to fighting progressive change and convincing citizens that the government was the enemy.

**DESPITE THE EXTRAORDINARY NATURE OF THE CURRENT CRISIS** and the widespread initial acceptance of extraordinary policies in response to it, a similar pushback by supporters of the status quo has already begun. In the United States, Republicans are falling back on their old talking points—voicing concern about the dangers of budget deficits, federal bailouts of state and local governments, and the so-called moral hazard associated with unconditional government handouts that might incentivize people to stay home rather than go to work. Grassroots activists, meanwhile, in many cases supported by the same donors and groups that helped get the Tea Party off the ground, have begun protesting against lockdowns, denouncing "big government" and "threats" to individual freedom—and they have been encouraged by Trump and other Republican leaders. As Jenny Beth Martin, the co-founder of the Tea Party Patriots, put it, she and her colleagues are ready to mobilize to ensure that when the pandemic is over, the United States remains a "capitalist country," as opposed to a socialist one.

To counter this, progressives must remember that the crisis and the extraordinary measures already taken in response to it are not enough to guarantee transformative change. Whether this will be an "FDR moment"—as Massachusetts Sen. Edward Markey, a co-author of the Green New Deal, and other progressives believe—depends on ensuring that the right political conditions are in place: It was Franklin D. Roosevelt's ability to rally voters and his party behind plans to dramatically reshape the relationship between the economy, government, and citizens as much as the widespread suffering and discontent with capitalism generated by the Great Depression that made the New Deal possible.

Translated to today, that means Democrats would need to mount a successful assault on the anti-government philosophy long championed by Republicans and temporarily called into question by the crisis, unify behind plans for transformative change, and convince citizens that these plans offer a better vision for the future than a patched-up version of the status quo. Demands for major structural reforms to combat racial injustice in the United States and elsewhere are subject to a similar dynamic. Institutionalizing major structural reforms in this area, like any other, requires winning elections and holding on to political power. Anything that enables opponents of change to shift attention away from problems that need addressing, erodes the broad but fragile support for reform that currently exists, or divides the Democratic coalition must be avoided.

Joe Biden, perhaps surprisingly, has pivoted significantly in this regard, from a message of continuity and competent management to one that champions deep structural reform in health care, the environment, infrastructure, education, racial justice-related issues, and more. Of course, in order to enact such changes, the presumptive Democratic nominee has to win the election in November and probably with coattails long enough to bring the House and Senate with him.

To do this, in turn, he must have more than a negative message that focuses on the mistakes, corruption, and ineptitude of the current

administration. Biden will have to convince the electorate that transformative change is feasible and desirable. And in power he and the Democrats have to remember that long-term change requires political shifts. During the late 20th century, Republicans put together a coalition of the wealthy, business leaders, religious conservatives, and discontented low-education whites united—although for different reasons—around a promise to shrink the role of government. This coalition enabled Republicans to enact significant changes at the local, state, and national levels. Democrats will have to pull off a similar feat, uniting their own disparate coalition around a message of dramatic change, downplaying the areas where their constituencies' interests diverge rather than converge.

If Democrats and progressives elsewhere cannot do this, history may still turn but in a different direction. As the Great Depression and the events of the early 1930s in Germany make clear, suffering and discontent can bolster the standing of nationalists, racists, and reactionaries as easily as they can propel progressives. FDR understood this—and the New Deal was designed as much to undercut the appeal of democracy's enemies as it was to reform capitalism. After all, during the 1930s, a surprising number of U.S. citizens and politicians, including Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and the Rev. Charles Coughlin, openly praised Hitler and expressed admiration for the dictatorships arising in many European countries.

Populists and right-wing extremists are already peddling a narrative that blames the crisis on foreigners—particularly China and immigrants—and are offering a vision of a post-pandemic world where globalization, multilateralism, free trade, and immigration are limited; borders are hardened; governments are empowered to protect the people from danger; and social justice and inequality are once again pushed to the back burner.

In the past, historical turning points have not been the result of crises alone but rather of revolutionaries taking advantage of them. And taking advantage of a crisis requires knowing what you want to achieve and how to do it.

**SHERI BERMAN** is a professor of political science at Barnard College, the author of *Democracy and Dictatorship in Europe: From the Ancién Regime to the Present Day*, and a columnist at FOREIGN POLICY.



YUNGHI KIM/CONTACT PRESS IMAGES

# Time for a Modern-Day New Deal

**To fight economic inequality, the United States needs an FDR. Can Joe Biden deliver?**




People line up to receive food at a distribution center in Brooklyn, New York, on May 20.

*by* **ROBERT KUTTNER**

**WARREN BUFFETT FAMOUSLY SAID YOU ONLY LEARN** who is swimming naked when the tide goes out. It is now low tide for America's hyperprivatized economy, and the receding waves have revealed catastrophic failures of ideology, policy, and business practice. The COVID-19 crisis has produced immense harm but one salutary effect: It has destroyed a lot of the conventional wisdom concerning governments and markets.

The dominant and now discredited ideology known as neoliberalism held that markets work tolerably well most of the time and that market failure was rare. Market fundamentalism—a total faith in the ability of free market capitalism to solve problems—was disgraced by the stock market crash of 1929 and the U.S. government's successful New Deal reforms during Franklin D. Roosevelt's presidency. But since the 1970s, a new neoliberal orthodoxy has been embraced by many Democrats as well as Republicans—who deregulated countless industries despite the mounting evidence that their policies were inviting financial crisis, producing more corruption than efficiency, and generating extreme inequality.

The mispricing of toxic financial assets, enabled by deregulation, led to the financial collapse of 2008. Supply-side tax cuts didn't increase public spending but instead exacerbated inequality. Deregulation of labor markets led to wage stagnation at the bottom while concentrating wealth at the top as hyperglobalization decimated the U.S. manufacturing sector. And the extreme commercialization of U.S. health care has created the Western world's most expensive and least efficient system. The costs of these systemic market failures vastly outweighed the benefits.

Liberated markets did not improve economic efficiency or overall growth. But they did make a few people very rich and tens of millions poorer. This rampant inequality has undermined the economic security of the American middle class.

The coronavirus crisis, which cost the U.S. economy more than 25 million jobs in four months—disproportionately hurting minorities—has further vindicated the need for a massive government role and provided an opening for Democrats to bury a failed ideology once and for all.

In principle, widespread unhappiness with extreme inequality represents an opportunity to advance a bolder agenda than anything since Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society or even Roosevelt's New Deal. But bringing about a more egalitarian economy will be much harder than it seems.

Most people are not agitated about inequality as an abstract principle; they are concerned about their own diminishing economic status. Calls to end inequality have also long been associated with poverty and race. To an anxious white middle class, the cause of greater equality has often had the ring of higher taxes on "us" or compensatory advantages to provide more for an undeserving "them."

Reversing the inequality of recent decades would require more regulation, increased public spending, much higher taxes on the rich, and some public ownership. To win widespread support for a radically reformist agenda, a progressive president will need to be clear about the causes of today's inequality and insecurity and propose remedies that could command broad popular and

congressional support. To increase the chances of success, it helps to look back at the egalitarian economy that the United States once had and how it was lost.

**DURING THE THREE DECADES AFTER WORLD WAR II,** the U.S. economy enjoyed a social contract that was a legacy of Roosevelt's New Deal. The result was a remarkable degree of economic equality for a system that was still essentially capitalist. In the 25 years between 1948 and 1973, the economy not only grew at record peacetime rates of nearly 4 percent per year; it also became more equal, with the bottom quintile of earners gaining income at a faster rate than the top. The economist Claudia Goldin referred to this unusual era as the Great Compression.

The rules of the postwar economy imposed strict controls on financial markets, which prevented speculative crashes and restrained incomes at the top. Marginal tax rates exceeded 90 percent, and government policies empowered trade unions and provided labor regulation, which raised incomes at the bottom.

Various federal programs enabled the working and middle classes to accumulate household wealth through homeownership while free or very cheap higher education reached nearly half the population without burdening them with debt. The United States enhanced economic security with public social insurance alongside a private welfare state of company health and pension benefits. This reached blue-collar workers as well as professionals. In addition, the postwar economy was largely insulated from low-wage imports because trade was only about 5 percent of GDP as late as 1960, which meant that domestic purchasing power could support domestic jobs.

In the 1950s, under Dwight Eisenhower's Republican presidency, this economic system was not viewed as radical; it was simply experienced as the new normal. But while the postwar order seemed to spring almost full-grown, its dismantling has been gradual and diffuse.

The reversal began in the 1970s, and when this regime of managed, egalitarian capitalism died, it did not jump—it was pushed. However, it's tricky to sort out whose fingerprints were on the deed. Certainly, Republicans and libertarians were prime offenders, but Democratic presidents also bear some of the blame.

Indeed, deregulation did not begin under Ronald Reagan but under Jimmy Carter. It reached new depths under Bill Clinton, as coached by advisors Robert Rubin and Lawrence Summers. Each worked both on Wall Street and in top economic policy jobs under Clinton and in Summers's case for both Clinton and Barack Obama. It was Obama's administration in 2010—following a devastating financial crisis—that pursued austerity economics long before the economy was in full recovery. Hyperglobalization, which had devastating effects on industrial America, was one of the few things that presidents of both parties agreed on.

On three occasions, when tougher labor laws to counteract union-bashing were just a few votes short of passage in the Senate, neither Carter nor Clinton nor Obama lifted a finger to put the legislation over the top. They were not sure they wanted a stronger labor movement pushing them from the left. The presidential wing of the Democratic Party was increasingly allied with Wall Street plutocrats, who liked the new economic order just fine. As a consequence, many voters unhappy with the results of a grossly unequal economy have not been sure whom to blame or whom to trust—and they are not entirely wrong. And at least partly as a result, voters were ready for an outlandish outsider like Donald Trump.

Extreme economic inequality has produced an undertow of concentrated political power that defends the status quo. These forces tend to undermine Democratic presidents' progressive impulses. Obama had everything going for him as an agent of Rooseveltian change. He was an outsider, and history even delivered a financial collapse on the Republicans' watch just before his 2008 victory.

But Obama flinched and appointed as his top economic team the same Wall Street advisors whose policies had produced the collapse. Obama's would-be successor, Hillary Clinton, sought to navigate these shoals by steering left on cultural issues and center-right on economic ones. That left some working-class voters to conclude that she cared more about bathroom laws than their economic pain.

Even if the 2020 Democratic nominee changes course, there is the further challenge of Congress. Joe Biden seems to be moving left. But in order to actually enact New Deal-scale policies, he'd need Roosevelt-scale majorities in Congress. Assuming a remotely fair election, the Democrats may well win majority control of both the House and Senate. Yet a working progressive majority will be a stretch.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is hobbled by dozens of centrist Democrats in the House (some voting on their districts' behalf; others voting on their donors'), and in the Senate the best-case scenario for Democrats is a small majority that includes some on the center-right. And if a Rooseveltian Biden failed to deliver impressive gains by the 2022 midterm elections, he could kiss a precarious majority goodbye.

**WHAT WOULD IT TAKE TO REPLICATE THE EQUALITY AND SECURITY** of the postwar era under very different circumstances? First, the United States would need more progressive taxation, both to contain great concentrations of wealth and to finance the social investment needed to give children from middle-class families a shot at the good life. As recently as 1982, the top marginal rate on individual incomes was 70 percent; today, it's only 37 percent. Corporate profits once paid a

tax of 50 percent; they now pay just 21 percent, and the effective rate is lower thanks to extensive loopholes.

Until 2003, dividends were taxed at the full individual tax rate; taxes on interest, dividends, and capital gains have all been slashed. Sen. Elizabeth Warren has proposed a wealth tax that would exempt everyone with wealth of under $50 million. But so concentrated is today's wealth that her tax would still bring in an estimated $3.7 trillion over 10 years. Just repealing the Trump tax cuts of 2018 would yield another $2 trillion.

While some remedies require taxing and spending, many are regulatory. If Congress had the votes and Biden had the nerve, he could enact laws restoring Wall Street to the role of the economy's servant rather than its master. Warren, once again, has written the playbook in two pieces of legislation, the Accountable Capitalism Act of 2018 and the Stop Wall Street Looting Act of 2019.

**Reversing the inequality of recent decades would require more regulation, increased public spending, much higher taxes on the rich, and some public ownership.**

As Warren suggests, the U.S. government would need to restore the separation between investment banking and commercial banking; close the loopholes in tax and regulatory law that allow private equity companies to function as predators on the real economy; return derivatives to the footnote that they were before the 1980s; make banking simple and transparent enough to regulate, complemented by some public banks; and require large corporations to get federal charters limiting their destructive behavior and put workers on their boards.

These reforms would destroy Wall Street's toxic business model—but Wall Street would not exactly roll over. Despite Biden's repositioning, his default setting is to turn to the economic advisors with close Wall Street ties from the Clinton-Obama era who spearheaded financial deregulation, such as Summers and former Obama chief of staff Rahm Emanuel. Biden is also reliant on donors from Wall Street; his roots in Delaware—with its lax incorporation laws—have long made him indulgent of the financial industry.

Even if wealth can be constrained at the top, there is still the challenge of raising earnings at the bottom. In addition to reviving the Wagner Act—to allow workers to organize or join unions—the U.S. government would have to confront the gig economy.

Many companies have redefined payroll jobs as contract work. Some of this is a violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act—illegally disguising regular workers as freelancers in order to deny them rights and benefits—but some of it represents new hybrids such as Uber and Lyft. To improve the pay and security of gig workers, the government would need to give them the same regulatory protections as payroll workers and enact a much higher minimum wage covering all workers.

A Democratic administration serious about tackling inequality would also need to reverse the dismantling of antitrust laws. Monopolies frustrate competition and lead to concentrated wealth and political influence. Several of America's richest people, such as Amazon's Jeff Bezos, made their fortunes in tech platforms that are virtual monopolies. Efforts to restore antitrust laws will mean confronting a Silicon Valley elite that has become a key source of funding for the Democratic Party.

To restore the U.S. government's capacity to regulate capitalism and reclaim domestic manufacturing, trade policy will also require reform. The original Bretton Woods scheme of 1944 allowed national governments plenty of policy independence. It permitted capital controls and the right of nations to condition imports on labor standards. Trade policy in the 1950s and 1960s was mainly about reciprocal reductions in tariffs, not about an absolute shift to global free markets. But by the 1990s, business groups branded many normal forms of public regulation and investment as illegal infringements on free trade. Democratic presidents, increasingly allied with Wall Street, were even more ferocious advocates of this approach than Republicans.

Even with a more robust trade policy, the United States will never have the manufacturing jobs it once had, thanks to automation. Most jobs will be in the service economy, which is notorious for low wages. The National Domestic Workers Alliance, and its project Caring Across America, has proposed a grand bargain to create a new category of social insurance. All workers who cared for the old, the young, or the sick—such as nurse aides and home care and child care workers—would be paid a living wage, and families could get the high-quality child care, nursing care, and home care they needed at affordable costs. This would help reduce inequality by bolstering the living standards of America's working poor, as well as by giving the middle class the package of benefits that the rich are able to purchase. But it would require annual public outlays in the hundreds of billions.

Health care represents another obstacle to a more egalitarian economy. It's clear that the most efficient and fair insurance system would be universal and organized by government. Standing in the way are several powerful industries and a

seemingly insurmountable structural challenge—moving from a system partly underwritten by employers to one that is tax-financed, without astronomical tax increases on the one hand and windfall gains to employers on the other. But there's a real opportunity here.

One strategy, proposed by Yale University's Jacob Hacker, the author of the original so-called public option proposal, would require all employers to provide good insurance for their workers and create incentives for companies to meet the requirement by buying in to Medicare. (The Medicare system is now just for people age 65 or older and those with disabilities; Hacker's approach would extend it to nearly everyone but without requiring a general tax increase since most costs would be paid by employers.) Biden has embraced a much more modest reform, of lowering the Medicare eligibility age to 60 and other piecemeal reforms, but not fundamental change for the entire system, which is what Americans need.

**THE SHIFTS SINCE 1980 HAVE WIDENED INEQUALITY** in another subtle respect. Young people from affluent families are cushioned by what might be called the parental welfare state. As costs of housing and education have risen and social supports have fallen, wealthy parents can give their offspring a huge head start not available to others—providing everything from early childhood enrichment programs to university fees to down payments on a house. The Harvard University economist Raj Chetty and his colleagues have demonstrated the dramatic increase in intergenerational inequality: At some elite universities, there are more students from families in the top 1 percent than from the bottom 60 percent.

A 30-year-old today without rich parents faces a bleak economic landscape when it comes to income, wealth, job opportunities, and debt. My generation of Americans born during or shortly after World War II enjoyed cheap homeownership, debt-free higher education, the likelihood of finding a payroll job with an employer that provided health and pension benefits, and affordable access to decent public schools (on one income); for today's young adults, this package has been destroyed.

Indeed, people my age have enjoyed windfall gains from housing inflation; the cost of those gains has been prohibitively expensive housing for our children and grandchildren. Young adults are less likely to have long-term payroll jobs and more likely to have precarious gigs; they are less likely to have good, employer-provided pensions or health coverage and more likely to have university loan debt. The rate of homeownership among young families has declined, in large part because it's harder to get a mortgage if one is burdened with student loan repayments.

Some of this can be remedied with policy. The U.S. government could forgive a lot of student debt and restore the model of free public higher education that the country enjoyed from the land-grant colleges of the 19th century through the 1980s, when state legislatures hellbent on cutting taxes began withdrawing public funding for higher education and replacing it with tuition and fees.

Affordable housing will be even harder to produce because much of the housing boom of the 1950s was the result not just of policies but of cheap farmland converted to suburbia. Cheap land is gone. Replicating the conditions of the 1950s would require a massive government investment in affordable housing on a larger scale than the United States has ever seen. This would entail using the government's power to assemble and then subsidize land costs to produce both modestly priced homes for purchase and socially owned rental housing. The current bipartisan policy of incentivizing private developers to build affordable homes and apartments has been a costly failure.

**AS A RESULT OF THESE SHIFTS, MOST YOUNGER AMERICANS** correctly believe that they will never live as well as their parents. The abrogation of the postwar U.S. social contract, therefore, should not just be understood as rising inequality. It's also a story of increasing economic precariousness, diminished life horizons, and greater hardening of intergenerational class lines. Many young people simply see themselves as having been born in an unlucky generation—not as victims of deliberate policy shift.

It will take uncommon political skill, resolve, and luck to connect these several dots and rally a broad coalition for what will be seen as drastic change—against bipartisan economic royalists who have never been more powerful. The needed package of policies would deliver a more productive, secure, and egalitarian America, just as it did during the postwar boom, but the political path is steep.

The coronavirus pandemic has revealed not just grotesque inequalities of race but has also underscored the vulnerabilities of the middle class and produced a broad movement for constructive change. The essential role of government is evident, as are the predations of unfettered capitalism and extreme globalization. Yet the United States' founders created a system of checks and balances that allowed for sweeping transformation only on rare occasions that combined large congressional majorities and a president capable of mobilizing broad public support for drastic reforms. The current president has abused his office for his own imagined glory. Should Biden win, Americans will soon learn if Trump's successor will seize the moment and use the power of the office for the public good. ■

**ROBERT KUTTNER** (*@rkuttnerwrites*) is a co-founder and co-editor of the American Prospect and the author of 12 books, most recently *The Stakes: 2020 and the Survival of American Democracy*.



# Margrethe Vestager Is Still Coming for Big Tech

**The coronavirus pandemic has made the world even more reliant on technology. The EU's competition commissioner says that only makes her fight more urgent.**

*Interview by* **RAVI AGRAWAL**

Photos by JESSE DITTMAR

**ANTITRUST REGULATORS ARE RARELY WELL KNOWN** outside of trade lobbies and industry circles. Not so Denmark's Margrethe Vestager, who may be the world's most famous corporate umpire. The European Union's competition commissioner, who began an unprecedented second term last November, is something of a global celebrity: She's a sought-after speaker, a female icon, and the person seen as most likely to rein in the unfettered dominance of the world's biggest technology firms.

Vestager has made news with the huge fines for anti-competitive behavior she has leveled at companies such as Google and Apple. But those punitive measures were limited to Vestager's jurisdiction—the common European market—and represent only minor stumbles for the world's most powerful corporations. That's why Vestager is redoubling her efforts and hoping other countries will follow her lead.

FOREIGN POLICY's Ravi Agrawal recently spoke with the Brussels-based Vestager about the future of regulation and competition in technology—and how the pandemic may have the strange effect of boosting her mission.

**FOREIGN POLICY:** I'll start with an easy question. How has the coronavirus pandemic affected your work?

**MARGRETHE VESTAGER:** I have been busier than ever before. It has been very intense. Of course, this is nothing compared to all the people who are working in hospitals and saving lives. But from the moment we realized the enormous effects of the lockdown, we knew we had to make sure that first aid is available fast and that it's managed in such a way that our single market doesn't become completely fragmented.

**FP:** Despite the historic job losses caused by the pandemic, the world's biggest tech firms all seem to be performing strongly in the stock market and further entrenching their market dominance. Does that worry you?

**MV:** Well, it makes the regulatory approaches that we were considering even more urgent. Because we have now had a crash course, a full-scale experiment, in doing everything digitally: remote working, learning, socializing, even exercising. We see all the benefits that come with digital technologies. But the downsides are clearer now too. And that is a huge driver to make sure that a digital world is based on fairness and market access. We are pushing even more strongly now on the things we were already working on. We have ongoing investigations—some preliminary, some more advanced—into Amazon, Google, Facebook, and Apple. We have this sense of urgency to make sure that the innovative potential of digital technologies can be fulfilled and that we still have an open market where one can have a go at it.

**FP:** There are all these theories about how the pandemic will change the world. What do you think it means for Big Tech and the fight to regulate it, not just in Europe but globally?

**MV:** We now see so clearly how much digital technologies will be an integrated part of every aspect of our lives, that if anyone doubted the need to make sure that we have the right regulatory framework on technology, they must now be convinced that you cannot have a laissez-faire approach to something that's so involved in everything we do. I think that what was there already—a nascent public feeling in favor of regulation—is now growing and maturing much faster than it would otherwise have done.

**FP:** But this could go two ways. One is that the pandemic boosts the appetite for regulation, but the other is that we could all become so much more reliant on some technologies and strengthen the market dominance of a few giant firms.

**MV:** I tend to think the first scenario is more likely. You do not want to depend on someone who holds a lot of market power because you would want to have choice. You would want to have openings for newcomers. All of us now have experience with several ways of remote working—Skype, Webex, Zoom, and so on—and I find it quite intriguing to see the different facilities and really appreciate that there is choice. One product suits one situation; another product suits another situation. We would be served quite poorly if there were no choice.

> **"We have this sense of urgency to make sure that the innovative potential of digital technologies can be fulfilled."**

**FP:** While you have been lauded for fining companies such as Google and Apple for their antitrust and anti-competitive behavior, critics say those punishments are the equivalent of a mere parking ticket.

**MV:** Yes. Our work here is still a work in progress. In these individual cases, the fine is a punishment for past illegal behavior. The second element in such a decision is a cease-and-desist order. And then we have the third element, which is a more restorative approach. Because what we have seen in Google's case is that even when the illegal behavior stops, that doesn't necessarily open the markets. Once you own a particular market, it takes a lot of effort to open that market for competitors. And this is why we also need a regulatory approach. We need to spell out more clearly to big digital gatekeepers that there are explicit dos and don'ts, and one of the obvious don'ts could be that you cannot promote yourself if you are a digital gatekeeper.

**FP:** You're in Brussels, but the world's biggest tech firms are in the United States. Newer tech giants are emerging in Asia. Your role gives you power to regulate and fine companies for their business in Europe but not the rest of the world. Is there a way for countries to collaborate more on regulation and antitrust law?

**MV:** Yes, I definitely think so. The interest in and the momentum of this cooperation is increasing. We have what we call the International Competition Network, where we discuss things like this. We have the General Data Protection Regulation [or

GDPR, a landmark EU regulation on data protection and privacy]. And we also conduct outreach. For instance, the European Commission was in Addis Ababa to meet with the African Union Commission, and officials there were extremely interested in how to deal with privacy, competition, and making sure that markets are contestable. I think there is a very strong interest in these matters and an openness to not necessarily copy but to take inspiration as to what is needed to make sure that national and regional businesses get a fair chance in these markets.

**FP:** How do you feel about companies such as Apple and Google creating contact-tracing apps?
**MV:** For me, the fundamental thing to look at is not the company but the behavior of the company. No matter who develops a virus-tracking app, what is very important is that it comes with an open protocol that third parties can verify—and ensure that the app is not doing anything other than what it is said to be doing. And a decentralized system is ideal. But transparency is the main thing here. And of course, that companies enable the phones to work with different apps and across borders and operating systems. Otherwise these apps will not be useful.

**FP:** Should surveillance be left to companies or countries? South Korea's Corona 100m app, for example, alerts users if they are within 100 meters of a coronavirus patient, but it has been criticized for being cavalier with patients' data. In India, the Aarogya Setu app has been downloaded by 120 million people, but that's mostly because the government made it mandatory. Obviously, neither of those cases are under your jurisdiction, but what do you make of them?
**MV:** What has been important for us—and that in itself has been quite challenging—is for the European member states to come together on one approach. And that is slowly but surely happening. The more you can have a coordinated approach, the easier it is to make sure that different apps can work together. For us, the fundamental thing here has been whether or not people would trust the technology. Obviously it would have to be voluntary whether you would download such an app or not, and you would only make that choice if you trusted the technology to do what it says and nothing else—that it would respect your privacy. And this is very important for us because, just before the pandemic, we launched a European strategy on data and a white paper on artificial intelligence, and the main takeaway here is to say we really believe in the benefits of digital technologies but only if we can trust these technologies to serve humans—and not just a few humans and not just a few companies. My guess is, because we can see how the GDPR has inspired other countries to take up similar measures, that citizens all around the world have a preoccupation with being able to trust their apps and what they do. People don't want to be part of the launch of a surveillance society for the next generation.

**FP:** In many of your public speeches and interviews, you often talk about the concept of trust in society. In your 2017 TED Talk, for example, you described how a lack of trust in the market can lead to wider social dissatisfaction. Do you think that people should put their trust in these companies' intentions?
**MV:** This is my sixth year as a law enforcer, and I see so many businesses that really make an effort to do things by the book and that struggle to innovate and to present the best possible service to their customers. And then I see a few companies—some that are returning customers where we keep receiving complaints—and we keep finding issues that give us reason to hand out big fines. I see both sides of this. I have a mixed feeling about this question because I also see the many good things and many companies that I would never have an issue with.

**FP:** You have expressed concern about Chinese companies taking over European ones, especially amid the pandemic, but your concern is primarily based on the notion that it may be unfair competition if the Chinese company is state-backed. But aren't those lines, in China and in other countries, murky? And if so, how do you deal with that?
**MV:** We've reassessed our relationship with China and basically retired the idea that China is a developing economy. China is in some areas a partner, for instance when it comes to fighting climate change, but also a strategic competitor. And that has been informing a lot of the work that we've been doing. We're in the process of finalizing a white paper on how to deal with foreign subsidiaries, both when it comes to reciprocity in market access and how to deal with state-owned or state-backed companies acquiring businesses within the single market. We felt a strong need to step up and act where we found a risk of unfair competition. The worry we have on acquisitions now is that there is a risk of a staggered global recovery. If some regions of the world recover faster than others, then there is the chance that some may think they should take advantage of it. We are very vigilant when it comes to that kind of risk. ■

*This conversation has been condensed and edited for publication.*

**RAVI AGRAWAL** (*@RaviReports*) is the managing editor of FOREIGN POLICY.

# After Hegemony

## The United States has abdicated its dominant role. Here's how to fill the gap.

*By* **OONA A. HATHAWAY** *and* **SCOTT J. SHAPIRO**

**ON APRIL 14, AS THE ENORMITY** of the coronavirus crisis was finally becoming clear, U.S. President Donald Trump announced that he was halting funding to the World Health Organization (WHO), delivering a major blow to an organization that depends on the United States for nearly 10 percent of its budget. Washington followed that decision with a declaration 10 days later that it would not take part in a global initiative to speed up the development, production, and distribution of drugs and vaccines to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. In early May, the United States sat out a global vaccine summit led by the European Commission, and later that month, Trump announced that the United States would withdraw from WHO altogether. Meanwhile, the United Nations Security Council has been silent, paralyzed by the rising tensions between China and the United States.

The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare how much global institutions have come to rely on a United States that has now abdicated its role as the world's indispensable nation. The Trump administration hasn't just responded to the emerging health crisis by imposing travel bans, carrying out draconian restrictions on immigration and asylum, and pressing intelligence agencies to distort assessments on the source of the outbreak. The United States has also turned on the global institutions it was instrumental in creating after World War II to address just such global threats.

But the United States' abandonment of global leadership may have an unexpected upside. As the world loses the positive impact of American exceptionalism, it might also start shedding its downside—top-down global governance that has favored a small number of nations, too often at the expense of the rest. The waning of U.S. hegemony opens up new possibilities for more decentralized, democratic systems of global governance involving genuine cooperation among a critical mass of nations. Rather than a world governed by a hegemon, it may be time for one managed by what might be called global clubs.

**REALIST HEGEMONIC STABILITY THEORY,** a leading school of thought in international relations, suggests that an open and liberal world economy requires the existence of a dominant state that has the capacity and the will to lead and overpower other states. The hegemon provides the rules that govern the international system and underwrites that system's stability and reliability with its military might. But when the hegemon declines, the system becomes unstable and eventually will collapse.

America's rejection of hegemonic responsibility—its unease with global institutions and tendency to go it alone—emerged long before COVID-19. And in the face of this growing absence of U.S. global leadership, some have asked—sometimes with optimism, more often with trepidation—whether China might come to fill the global leadership vacuum. The potential for China to take on a greater role in international affairs has been the subject of speculation for years, but it has taken on new urgency during the pandemic.

Yet China's effort to step into the vacuum left behind by the United States has been more a stumble than a waltz. In May, some of the health care supplies Beijing donated to other countries turned out to be defective, and many of the so-called gifts it had touted were in fact purchased by the recipients. China has been put on the defensive by growing evidence that it suppressed information about the emerging coronavirus outbreak. It is hobbled, too, by its naked need to quell internal dissent by feeding rapid economic growth by any means necessary. Beijing's bid to expand its control over the world's resources can't help but breed suspicion. China is too obviously out for its own interests to effectively unite the world behind it.

Some have hoped that the current crisis will finally spur reform and reorganization at the United Nations. But those aspirations have been repeatedly dashed by the insuperable fact that no reform is possible without the five permanent members of the Security Council—China, the United States, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom—and those members have no interest in effective reform precisely because it will loosen their stranglehold on the organization.

Does this mean we are doomed, as Richard Haass recently argued in *Foreign Affairs*, to enter "a global landscape of increased great-power



Illustration by TOM STRAW

rivalry, nuclear proliferation, weak states, surging refugee flows, and growing nationalism, along with a reduced U.S. role in the world"? Not necessarily. The crisis offers the opportunity to transform the global order from one dominated by a single state, or a small number of them, to a more equal system of global governance. It's time to stop waiting for a hegemon to come to the rescue and instead try to address more of our global problems through independently organized global clubs.

Global clubs are a form of governance that operates on principles similar to any other club: States voluntarily choose to join an alliance to gain benefits of membership. In return, they agree to comply with certain conditions. Any state with the initiative could start a club of its own to achieve cooperative goals. And members could discipline one another by denying the benefits of membership to those that break the rules.

We are already seeing some signs that middle-sized powers are tired of relying on the great powers to address the pandemic. Australia, for example, pushed for a global inquiry into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic, building what Andrew Hastie, a backbencher in the Australian Parliament, called a "coalition of like-minded nations." To act on the stage as a middle power, he argues, "you need to do it from a position of strength—that includes strength in numbers."

The idea of decentralizing global governance to shifting alliances of like-minded nations is not entirely new. Much of international law already operates on precisely this principle of shared interests and decentralized enforcement. But unmooring global governance from reliance on a hegemonic actor, and from the global institutions we've known since the end of World War II, could become reality in part because of the conditions created by the pandemic.

**THE APPROACH OF HARNESSING STRENGTH IN NUMBERS** through a global club has worked before. In 1985, the British Antarctic Survey shocked the world when it reported that a huge hole in the Earth's ozone layer had formed over Antarctica. The ozone layer protects the planet from the sun's harmful ultraviolet radiation, and its depletion posed grave risks for human health.

A decade earlier, scientists had predicted that chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), popular as propellants in aerosol cans, coolants for refrigeration, and ingredients for making Styrofoam, had the potential to destroy the ozone layer. The British Antarctic Survey had confirmed the theory with terrifying implications.

Though galvanized to tackle the public health crisis, governments faced a quandary. They could negotiate a global treaty to ban CFC consumption, but there was no reason to think that a treaty would make any difference. Though every state had an interest in banning ozone-depleting chemicals, every state had an even greater interest in a ban that included everyone but them. A global treaty, in other words, would be hamstrung by massive cheating. States would proudly renounce the use of the cheap, effective chemicals but would secretly free-ride off the sacrifice of others. An environmental agreement to eliminate CFCs would succeed only if its provisions were enforceable. But how?

The solution, embodied in the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances That Deplete the Ozone Layer, was extremely clever. The protocol created a club of sorts. When members signed up, they undertook to pay their dues by assuming two obligations. The first obligation was to reduce their consumption of CFCs. The phaseout was slow enough to allow substitutes to be put in place but fast enough to prevent the complete destruction of the ozone layer. The second obligation was to sell ingredients for producing CFCs only to club members. This commitment gave nonmembers an incentive to join. To be left out of the club meant not being able to buy ingredients from those in the club. The benefits of membership, and the costs of being a nonmember, increased as the club got bigger. Because of the trade ban, every member that joined the club meant one less supplier of CFC ingredients to nonmembers.

The enforcement system is simple and remarkably effective: States are required to report their own data; states that are party to the protocol are also able to report concerns about other parties. When members fall out of compliance, there is first an effort to get that country to draw up and follow a plan to return to compliance. States that still fail to comply are referred to a "Meeting of the Parties," which may issue collective sanctions, including suspension of privileges of membership.

Thirty years on, CFCs have been phased out all around the world, and the hole in the ozone layer has stopped growing. The layer will be fully restored by 2070.

**THE ENORMOUS SUCCESS OF THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL** should not have been a surprise. Economists had long distinguished between private and public goods and considered the different ways of securing them. Private goods are rivalrous and excludable. Only I can eat my apple (rivalry), and I can keep you from eating it (excludability). Public goods are non-rivalrous and non-excludable. Both you and I can enjoy clean air (non-rivalry), and I can't stop you from enjoying it (non-excludability). And because public goods are non-rivalrous and non-excludable, economists predict that the market will fail to produce enough of them. If I pay for goods that you can enjoy too and I can't stop you from enjoying them, why would you pay for it?

In 1965, James Buchanan wrote about another kind of good he called "club goods." Club goods are non-rivalrous (like public goods) but excludable (like private goods). Consider a swimming club. Club members can enjoy swimming in their pool at the same time (non-rivalry) and can use a gate to keep nonmembers out (excludability). Because of the

pool's excludability, nonmembers who don't pay for its construction and maintenance will not be able to free-ride off members' contributions. The market, therefore, will not underproduce swimming pools.

The Montreal Protocol was successful because it did not attempt to save the ozone layer directly. The ozone layer is a public good, and the market cannot produce or maintain public goods efficiently. It succeeded because it sought to protect the ozone layer indirectly by regulating the club goods that threatened it. The treaty set up a club where only members had access to easily trade the essential ingredients for making CFCs. The due they paid was reduced consumption.

The best way to protect or produce global goods, we suggest, is not to do so directly—through outright regulation—but rather by creating clubs that protect or produce the precursors of global goods. To see how this might work, consider a club to deal with vaccine production.

**The crisis offers the opportunity to transform the global order from one dominated by a single state, or a small number of them, to a more equal system of global governance.**

As the world races to control the coronavirus pandemic, the search for a vaccine may seem an ideal candidate for states to pool their resources. Instead of individual states testing different candidates in an uncoordinated fashion, it would be more productive for a collective approach where states test different prototypes and agree to share results with each other. Unfortunately, the chemical composition of a successful vaccine is a public good. Anyone can use it to produce a vaccine (non-rivalry), and, like all ideas, it is hard to keep secret (non-excludability). Aside from the difficulty in maintaining secrecy, it is unethical not to share a cure for a deadly disease that is ravaging the globe.

Even though the chemical composition of the vaccine is a public good, vaccine production is a club good. Producing the billions of individual doses to inoculate people around the world requires the building of large and specialized manufacturing facilities to create enough supply. Different types of vaccines require distinct manufacturing processes that utilize different materials. For a vaccine to be produced rapidly, facilities for all the likely candidates need to be ready when a working vaccine is discovered. The required systems cannot be created overnight, nor is it efficient for every state to build the full array of possible facilities on its own.

The solution would be for states to form vaccine clubs. Members of such a club would commit not only to share resources but to build prototype vaccine facilities based on promising candidates. Once a vaccine has been found, club members would be able to use the facilities to produce the vaccine right away. As an ethical matter, the club would provide to the world the chemical composition of the successful vaccine free of charge. But since nonmembers would not have existing facilities at the ready for the large-scale production of vaccines, they would be at a significant disadvantage.

Can the club goods approach work for issues that states have traditionally been most interested in, such as their own security? The answer is yes. Indeed, NATO provides just such a kind of club good. States that are party to NATO agree to come to one another's defense: Every state gets protection from attack in return for agreeing to provide security to everyone else in the club.

Admittedly, NATO was formed in part to provide U.S. hegemonic support and protection to Western Europe, but the same principle could apply without a hegemon. The nascent African Union Peace and Security Council, for example, aims to promote peace, security, and stability in Africa. It has begun developing standby forces that can be deployed to prevent a dispute from escalating, engage in peacebuilding, and provide humanitarian assistance to member states. As long as these security arrangements are defensive in nature, and states consent in advance to humanitarian intervention, they are entirely consistent with the U.N. Charter's prohibition on states' unilateral resort to military force.

An advantage of clubs is that they can be formed in situations where the great powers are unwilling to act. Consider cybersecurity. Many believe that the international community needs rules for the regulation of computer hacking, but Russia, China, and the United States have been unable to agree on the rules or how to enforce them. As a result, there has been little progress in forming global rules for cyberspace.

Cyberclubs could allow groups of like-minded states to overcome this impasse. Different groups could establish their own rules for proper activities in cyberspace. Clubs would enforce those rules by limiting access to their networks to those who do not abide by the rules. Consequences could range from slower access to networks to complete exclusion for the most serious and persistent violations. One could imagine a similar approach to overcoming great-power intransigence in addressing climate change, with climate clubs binding states to emission rules and establishing tradable credits enforced by tariffs and market exclusions.

**GLOBAL CLUBS OFFER AN OPPORTUNITY** for shifting alliances of states to gather together to pursue their shared interests by creating cooperative agreements. The club rules are enforced not by a hegemon but by members directly by denying the benefits of membership to bad actors. One advantage of such decentralized governance is that any state can start a club. It doesn't take a hegemon; it just takes a good idea.

Some global clubs already exist. If you look for them, you will see clubs across the global governance landscape. But in the postwar era, these clubs have taken a back seat to U.S.-driven international organizations that pursued policies over which there was significant consensus in the developed Western world, including free trade, intellectual property protection, international security, and, yes, public health.

The pandemic has made clear that this consensus has broken down and U.S. global leadership evaporated. Rather than build alliances and lead the world to address the pandemic, the United States has walled itself off, refused to participate in international efforts, and sought to shift blame abroad. In doing so, it has made clear that states should stop looking for a hegemonic savior that no longer exists. If they want to make progress on global problems, they should instead form global clubs.

As tragic as the collapse of U.S. global leadership may be, the shift toward global clubs could be a good thing. Clubs gain their power by building consensus: The more members join, the more powerful the group becomes. The more attractive the cooperative project, the more states will join, and the more effective the club will be. Clubs will likely not replace the existing multilateral system, but they offer a new way for states to make multilateral progress in the face of great-power paralysis.

The failure of the United States to lead in this time of crisis has been a tragedy. But it is also an opportunity to transform a system whose efficacy and legitimacy have been slowly eroding for decades. ■

**OONA A. HATHAWAY** (*@oonahathaway*) is the Gerard C. and Bernice Latrobe Smith professor of international law and professor of political science at Yale Law School. **SCOTT J. SHAPIRO** (*@scottjshapiro*) is the Charles F. Southmayd professor of law and professor of philosophy at Yale Law School. They are the authors of *The Internationalists: How a Radical Plan to Outlaw War Remade the World*.



# The Future of Globalization

**The pandemic proved, once and for all, that the world can't be flat. But global trade can recover—if we rewrite the rules.**

MUNEM WASIF/AGENCE VU



A team of dressmakers works in a factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Nov. 22, 2012.

*by* **HENRY FARRELL**
*and* **ABRAHAM NEWMAN**

**A PAIR OF SENTENCES, PUBLISHED ON APRIL 17,** show us how strange globalization has become: "Two semi-trailer trucks, cleverly marked as food-service vehicles, met us at the warehouse. When fully loaded, the trucks would take two distinct routes back to Massachusetts to minimize the chances that their contents would be detained or redirected."

This passage didn't appear in one of Richard Stark's crime novels or in the script of an East Coast reshoot of *Breaking Bad*. It was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, describing a hospital's desperate efforts to secure a shipment of personal protective equipment.

This is not simply a story about the United States. It reflects a much bigger change from a world of predictable trade and exchange to one of government blockades and daring heists—a change triggered by the coronavirus pandemic. The United States intercepted medical masks being shipped from Thailand to Germany and redirected them for its own purposes, in a move German officials described as piracy. Germany itself blocked the export of masks and other medical equipment at a time when its fellow European Union member Italy was begging for help. India restricted the export of key pharmaceuticals and drug precursors. Newspaper reports describe a chaotic global marketplace where governments and health care officials consort with dubious middlemen for medical supplies, acting on rumors and personal connections, fighting to outbid and undercut each other. And this behavior has spread to other sectors like auto manufacturing; experts worry that the next battles may be over food.

But the crisis that globalization faces has roots that go far deeper than the current pandemic. Many political and business leaders still hope that they can reverse the arrow of time, returning to a golden age in which free market globalization worked magic. The problem is that that age never existed, except in their imaginations. In a hyper-globalized economy, it made sense for individual firms to focus heavily on increasing efficiency and achieving market dominance—actions that led to greater returns and rising stock prices. But these trends also generated systemic vulnerabilities, imperiling fragile supply chains in times of crisis and tempting governments to target dominant companies for their own advantage, creating new risks for citizens and states.

To move forward from our current crisis of globalization, we need to build something better in its stead: a system that mitigates the risks of economic and political dependency and supports a new vision of global society. Rather than withdrawing from globalization, we would remake it so that it focused on different problems than economic efficiency and global markets. Now that the pandemic has dramatically underscored what's wrong with the system, we can think more clearly about what an alternative would look like.

**GLOBALIZATION—THE VAST INCREASE IN FLOWS** of money, goods, information, and people over the last 30 years—was supposed to make the world less vulnerable to disruptive economic shocks. How did we get it so badly wrong?

In part, we were blinded by the mythology that pundits like Thomas Friedman wrapped around the real workings of globalization. These arguments depicted globalization as the triumph of market efficiency over retrograde national politics. Businesses and consumers could search the globe for better and cheaper suppliers. If one supplier proved unreliable, greedy, or recalcitrant, they could be easily substituted or replaced. The geopolitics of the Cold War would fade away as states too were subjected to the ruthless discipline of a world market that had escaped their control and become their master. Finally, while global interdependence might create new problems—pandemics, global warming, pollution, overfishing—these difficulties could be solved by markets with a little help from liberal international institutions.

These mutually reinforcing claims underpinned an apparent golden age for multinational business. Manufacturing was transformed from something that happened mostly inside countries to something that happened across them, supported by a fantastical gossamer of global supply chains and just-in-time delivery. Global economic networks rapidly conducted information and money around the world. Governments bought into the myth, fearing that capital would flee their economies if they broke with the iron disciplines of neoliberalism.

Governments also provided the foundation for global institutions that facilitated economic cooperation and prioritized openness as their organizing ambition. Everyone seemed to agree that more trade was a good thing. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade was transformed into the World Trade Organization (WTO), which tore down barriers to global trade and settled disputes among states. Other institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund pushed the famous Washington Consensus, a set of principles for economic reform that emphasized liberalization and deplored government interventions that might impede market processes. Governments implemented reforms that reflected these new principles—willingly or because they had to.

But behind the soothing stories about the benefits of the global marketplace, globalization was quietly becoming more fragile and riddled with vulnerabilities. In some sectors, suppliers had become concentrated in geographically dense clusters, while in others the demand for efficiency drove companies to rely on just one supplier that could provide a necessary component. Apparent flexibility disguised the development of new rigidities.

The last decade provides painful evidence of the fragility of a globalized economic system that promoted efficiency and the power of markets. The 2008 financial crisis was the product of an interconnected banking system that rewarded short-term thinking, created risky new financial products, and was badly regulated at the national and global levels. Because so many firms were too big to fail, globalization itself had to fail. A few key suppliers became bottlenecks, and systemic risks increased dramatically—including the possibility of pandemics—but global institutions had not kept pace. Instead, states have exploited whatever vulnerabilities they can as they try to protect their own populations and pursue their broader geostrategic interests.

Powerful states had always wriggled out of the shackles of market discipline when their security was at stake. Most notably, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and growing U.S.-China competition led U.S. policymakers to realize that they could use their control over businesses that had made themselves irreplaceable in the global economy to hurt adversaries and coerce unwilling firms, organizations, and even states by threatening to exclude them from the global marketplace.

**The main narrative of the globalizers—that of a so-called flat earth—concealed the problems of systemic fragility and state exploitation.**

The United States, for example, weaponized institutions that play a central role in international banking, such as the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, better known as SWIFT, using them to cut Iran out of the global financial system. It similarly used its influence over Qualcomm and other makers of sophisticated semiconductors to hamstring the Chinese telecommunications manufacturer Huawei, which it viewed as a strategic threat. Japan has used its control over specialized chemicals manufacturers to threaten South Korea's electronics industry.

The main narrative of the globalizers—that of a so-called flat earth—concealed the problems of systemic fragility and state exploitation. Now, both have emerged and threaten to reinforce each other. When powerful states suddenly realize how frail global supply chains are, they are tempted to use their coercive power to redirect supplies to themselves at the expense of others. This tempts other states to retali-

STANISLAV KRASILNIKOV/TASS/SIPA USA



A worker stacks face masks during round-the-clock production to fulfill pandemic demand in a special economic zone in Moscow on May 18.

ate, weakening the entire system. It's hard to get things done when key parts of the global economy suddenly seize up. It's even harder when they become key battlegrounds in a tacit economic war.

**THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC HAS NOT ONLY SHOWN UP** the weaknesses of the global economy and the narratives that justify it but has also demonstrated that unregulated globalization can be dangerous. One of the reasons why the economy is hurting so severely is because it is so densely interconnected. When the coronavirus closes down a components factory in Italy's Lombardy region, the entire Western European car industry may be affected. When cars aren't being manufactured, car dealerships can't do business, and financial institutions can't make profits from car loans. An entire economy can go bad very quickly when everything depends on everything else.

But the problem is even worse than that. The coronavirus dramatically increases the demand for some goods at the same time as it damages supply. This explains the extraordinary shortages of medical supplies that plagued states in the wake of the pandemic. Suddenly, everyone wanted masks, test kits, and ventilators. However, some of these goods relied on complex supply chains that have been thrown into disarray: Test kits, for example, require chemical reagents that are suddenly hard to find. The markets for masks and personal protective equipment are highly concentrated, with key components provided by only a few suppliers located in a handful of countries. Three-quarters of the hygiene and medical nonwoven fabrics needed for masks are made by a single German manufacturer. Finally, the global logistics system has been paralyzed—it is not only difficult to find sources for key components and products, but it is hard to transport them when you do find them.

This explains why states used dirty tricks to fight each other for medical supplies. For example, the Trump administration identified the key role that businesses like 3M play in manufacturing medical masks. While masks are made using global supply chains—it is cheaper to make them in China than in the United States—companies faced growing legal pressure from a few powerful states. When the coronavirus pandemic started, the Chinese government effectively blocked all exports of masks, forcing 3M's Chinese factories to produce for China alone. This spurred vigorous complaints from Trump administration officials such as trade advisor Peter Navarro, who claimed in February that Beijing effectively nationalized 3M, a U.S. company operating in China, "to prevent them from sending us any stuff." In April, after the Trump administration had finally woken up to the threat of the coronavirus, it took a leaf from China's book, asking 3M to stop exporting respirators from the United States to Canada and Latin American companies, prompting 3M to warn that other countries might retaliate. The United States also escalated the crisis by using the Defense Production Act to require 3M to redirect masks that were made by its subsidiaries in China and elsewhere back home.

The immediate consequence was that a politics of "sicken thy neighbor" flourished around the world. The immediate problem was bad enough—limited supply of the goods necessary to fight the coronavirus and seemingly limitless demand for those very same goods. Yet as states continue to play hardball with each other, they risk making the problem worse by deepening each other's insecurity. Hoarding toilet paper won't be funny if it becomes the new organizing principle for the world economy. Key supplies will be misallocated across countries as hot spots come and go. And those least able to fight for their corner—poor and middle-income countries with little clout over manufacturers—will suffer most. Brazil's government labs can't carry out coronavirus tests because the crucial reagents have been routed to other countries. South Africa and Zambia are struggling too.

Even if the immediate threat of the coronavirus lessens in the coming months, the underlying political problem will not go away and might get

much worse. States are currently playing defense, looking to protect their own citizens regardless of the consequences for others. But what if they start playing offense instead? Already, states fear that any company that developed an effective coronavirus vaccine would become a new choke point, allowing other governments to deny access to the vaccine for purposes of control and punishment. At the beginning of the crisis, the German newspaper *Die Welt* reported that the United States had offered to purchase CureVac, a German biotechnology company with an early lead on a vaccine, and supposedly requested exclusive rights to the product. While the details were disputed, Germany's foreign minister issued a stark rebuke to the Washington. Germany doesn't trust that the United States would share a vaccine even with its close allies. China has even greater reason to worry.

Pundits and politicians assumed that free markets and economic globalization could support a self-sustaining international order. Instead, it has undermined itself. The corporate world's quest for efficiency has made the global economy more fragile, and its desire to control markets has provided states with the means to turn that space into a battlefield.

**THE CURRENT MODEL OF GLOBALIZATION** is unsustainable. It is creating unacceptable levels of risk both for citizens and states. The future of globalization will depend on the decisions of political leaders as well as businesses. The United States faces a particularly stark choice, as it decides on a new president amid a pandemic.

If Donald Trump succeeds in setting the agenda, America's future direction is clear. The fragility of the global system will give economic nationalists more reason to do what they want to do anyway, which is to shift from global free trade to harnessing the power of the nation-state. The globalized economy would shrink, as more production takes place inside national borders, reducing reliance on foreign components. The United States is the primary guarantor of the current global system. If it shifts to economic nationalism, other countries are likely to shift too, either because they want to or in self-defense. China's Xi Jinping would respond with his own form of economic nationalism. Europe and a few other midsize economies might try to maintain the ectoplasmic remnant of a multilateral system among themselves, but their efforts would be doomed without support from other great powers.

If Trump is defeated this November, the United States faces a much more complicated choice. The easy path is to treat nationalism as a symptom of Trump's four years in power, a temporary aberration that can quickly be forgotten as the world returns to the status quo. A Joe Biden administration might look to rebuild the existing system of multilateralism while tacitly redesigning it to hold China down or perhaps to lock China out. Once again, the United States would be willing to engage the WTO, to cooperate with allies, and to do whatever it took to support the global spread of free markets.

**The first step toward lowering tensions is for states to acknowledge that globalization is not producing a flat world but a complex system and to figure out how to insulate themselves from its risks.**

But going back to business as usual would worsen the problem, not solve it. The existing model of globalization, not Trump, is the root cause of the current breakdown. Even in the best-case scenarios, embracing the old approach to multilateralism would fail to solve the underlying problems. Businesses would continue to make the world more fragile as they pursued risky strategies to make their supply chains more efficient, and as the most successful of them consolidated market power, they would become easier targets for states that never ceased being interested in coercive power. The most plausible outcome is bigger future crises with worse political repercussions.

For that matter, a supposed return to normality is unlikely to look particularly normal. It is difficult to imagine, for example, how air travel might resume in anything like its previous form without far more extensive cooperation among countries to prevent new outbreaks of the coronavirus or successor viruses. Free markets are incapable of sustaining globalization without a much more extensive role for the state. Meanwhile, if China is locked out of the existing multilateral order, it will start building its own alternative order, making it far harder to coordinate to solve global problems.

The more difficult path is also the only sustainable one, creating a new model of globalization that can supplement and, over time, partly supplant the old. If the old globalization was based on the rule of markets, the new globalization will have to be based on the primacy of public safety and the well-being of people. It must recognize that maintaining a complex global economy will sometimes require active corrective measures to protect the societies embedded within it.

Rather than assuming that an open globalized system can solve its own problems, it would look to prevent them. Rather than just preserving openness, global institutions would have to address problems that ordinary

people care about, such as health, equality, sustainability, and security.

Firms and governments will have to pay the necessary short-term costs to confront the problem of fragility and to reassess the risks within supply chains. This will require not just stockpiling but more focus on the location and distribution of manufacturing, pushing companies to build in redundancies both for their own safety and that of the global economy. As Barry Lynn and others have argued, it will also require a new model of antitrust. Regulators need to recognize how monopolies create single points of failure in times of crisis, while judges need to pay attention to the national security as well as economic consequences of their decisions. Concentrated economic power creates new choke points in the economy that make it less adaptable and more vulnerable.

A problem-oriented globalization might also moderate the security competition that is heating up between the United States and China. Continued economic nationalism will quickly intensify this competition, while rebuilding multilateralism to exclude China will lead to a new era of clashes, which the world can ill afford. The United States and China are currently more inclined to exploit the system's weaknesses than to mitigate them, even if that hurts them as well as everyone else in the long run.

The first step toward lowering tensions is for states to acknowledge that globalization is not producing a flat world but a complex system and to figure out how to insulate themselves from its risks. Mapping this world's networks and vulnerabilities will require new bureaucracies and mandatory reporting and transparency requirements for business. Just as businesses need to report possible adverse events to their shareholders, they would have to stress-test their supply chains, reporting and rectifying the weak points or risk actions from new regulators or lawsuits from investors or customers if their supply chains fail.

A more thoughtful globalization will also require a new approach to trade: With better information, states will sometimes have legitimate reason to limit their exposure to the world economy so as to minimize vulnerabilities. Instead of the crude reshoring and high national tariffs proposed by economic nationalists, we must map the intricacies of the system, identify key vulnerabilities, and mitigate them. Rather than decoupling, states would have to recouple. Sometimes that might lead to reshoring within national borders, but more often it would involve identifying bottlenecks and creating more robust global supply relationships, on the basis of active agreement among allies and tacit accommodations among adversaries not to exploit vulnerabilities.

Individual state action will be insufficient on its own. Some of those bureaucracies will have to be international. For example, resuming travel in a world where new viruses can instantly circle the globe will require extensive—and sometimes intrusive—information sharing. This new model of globalization would give institutions such as the World Health Organization extensive new powers to gather information and to investigate when states are being deceptive. International organizations could also administer shared rewards to scientists and companies that develop vaccines, on the condition that the vaccines and associated patents and rights be made universally available. Of course, the Trump administration wants to defund the world health apparatus—but U.S. allies in Europe and elsewhere are betting that this decision will be reversed if Trump loses in November.

Similar institutions could help solve other problems being created by globalization, most importantly including global warming. It's conceivable that state power could be used to solve some of globalization's pathologies, rather than worsen them. A Biden administration, for example, might turn its effective control over the dollar and U.S. clearing system to tackle collective problems such as climate change, imposing financial sanctions on climate cheats. The threat of unilateral action could spur the creation of new multilateral institutions by making laggards and free riders pay some of the costs of their inaction. The EU has long sought a partner in the global climate fight, and even China might welcome external pressure to justify a crackdown on provincial authorities building coal-based power plants. The United States has been willing to use its formidable economic power in the past, forcing other countries for example to enforce their laws against bribery. If it deploys its power to address obvious global needs, it may find itself pushing on an open door as domestic interests realign around solving global problems.

The coronavirus has exposed the deep weaknesses of globalization, making it clear that we need to build something new. In domestic politics, everything suddenly seems up for grabs, as social movements challenge the established political order to face up to problems that it has swept beneath the carpet for decades. The challenge is to build a better approach to solving global problems, too, before they tear everything apart.

Globalization's current dysfunction is a product of market forces and will not be solved either by economic nationalism or a naive return to the open market liberalism that created it. Instead, the current crisis opens up an opportunity to create a different approach to globalization, one that recognizes its tendency to generate problems that it cannot solve itself and also one that prioritizes people's safety and prosperity. Our lives depend on it. ■

**HENRY FARRELL** (*@henryfarrell*) is the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Agora Institute professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. **ABRAHAM NEWMAN** (*@ANewman_forward*) is a professor in the government department and the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

# CHINA'S TWO PATHS TO GLOBAL DOMINATION

To stop it, Washington must first figure out which strategy Beijing has chosen.

by HAL BRANDS and JAKE SULLIVAN



**XI JINPING'S CHINA IS DISPLAYING** a superpower's ambition. Only a few years ago, many American observers still hoped that China would reconcile itself to a supporting role in the liberal international order or would pose—at most—a challenge to U.S. influence in the Western Pacific. The conventional wisdom was that China would seek an expanded regional role—and a reduced U.S. role—but would defer to the distant future any global ambitions. Now, however, the signs that China is gearing up to contest America's global leadership are unmistakable, and they are ubiquitous.

There is the naval shipbuilding program, which put more vessels to sea between 2014 and 2018 than the total number of ships in the German, Indian, Spanish, and British navies combined. There is Beijing's bid to dominate high-tech industries that will determine the future distribution of economic and military power. There is the campaign to control the crucial waterways off China's coast,

Illustration by FOREIGN POLICY



as well as reported plans to create a chain of bases and logistical facilities farther afield. There are the systematic efforts to refine methods of converting economic influence into economic coercion throughout the Asia-Pacific and beyond.

Not least, there is the fact that a country that formerly disguised its ambitions now asserts them openly. China has entered a "new era," Xi announced in 2017, and must "take center stage in the world." Two years later, Xi used the idea of a "new Long March" to describe China's worsening relationship with Washington. Even strategic shocks that originated within China have become showcases for Beijing's geopolitical aspirations: Witness how Xi's government has sought to turn a coronavirus crisis made worse by its own authoritarianism into an opportunity to project Chinese influence and market China's model overseas.

The precise intentions of opaque, authoritarian regimes are difficult to discern. And there is danger in definitive declarations of hostile intent because they can lead to fatalism and self-fulfilling prophecies. The two of us have different priors about whether stable, constructive U.S.-China relations are still possible. But it requires a degree of willful ignorance not to ask whether China is in fact seeking (or will inevitably seek) to establish itself as the world's leading power and how it might go about achieving that goal. The architects of America's China strategy, no matter how instinctively accommodating or confrontational they might be, must face this issue squarely.

If true superpower status is China's desired destination, there are two roads it might take to try to get there. The first is the one American strategists have until now emphasized (to the extent they acknowledged China's global ambitions). This road runs through China's home region, specifically the Western Pacific. It focuses on building regional primacy as a springboard to global power, and it looks quite familiar to the road the United States itself once traveled. The second road is very different because it seems to

defy the historical laws of strategy and geopolitics. This approach focuses less on building a position of unassailable strength in the Western Pacific than on outflanking the U.S. alliance system and force presence in that region by developing China's economic, diplomatic, and political influence on a global scale.

The question of which of these roads China should take is a pressing one for Beijing's strategists, who will face tough decisions about what to invest in—and what fights to avoid—in the coming years. And the question of what road China will take has profound implications for American strategists—and, ultimately, the rest of the world.

**THE EMERGING CONVENTIONAL WISDOM** holds that China will try to establish global influence by first establishing regional hegemony. This does not mean physically occupying neighboring countries (with the potential exception of Taiwan), as the Soviet Union did during the Cold War. But it does mean that Beijing must make itself the dominant player in the Western Pacific, out to the first island chain (which runs from Japan to Taiwan to the Philippines) and beyond; it must gain an effective veto over the security and economic choices of its neighbors; and it must rupture America's alliances in the region and push U.S. military forces farther and farther away from China's shores. If China cannot do this, it will never have a secure regional base from which to project power globally. It will be confronted by persistent security challenges along its vulnerable maritime periphery; it will have to focus its energies and military assets on defense rather than offense. And so long as Washington retains a strong military position along the first island chain, regional powers—from Vietnam to Taiwan to Japan—will try to resist China's rise rather than accommodate it. Put simply, China cannot be a true global power if it remains surrounded by U.S. allies and security partners, military bases, and other outposts of a hostile superpower.

One reason this scenario seems plausible to Americans is that it so closely resembles their country's own path to primacy. From the early days of the Republic, U.S. officials understood that Washington could hardly conceive of playing a major role in global affairs until it had developed a degree of strategic invulnerability within North America and the larger Western Hemisphere. This was the strategic logic that connected the many components of a decades-long campaign to evict European rivals from the hemisphere, from the Monroe Doctrine in the 1820s through the breaking of Spanish power in the Caribbean during the War of 1898. The same idea underpinned a century's worth of efforts—some of them morally ambiguous and even deeply problematic—to keep Europeans from reestablishing a foothold in the region, from the Roosevelt Corollary in 1904 through the Reagan administration's semi-covert war against Sandinista Nicaragua, which was aligned with Cuba and the Soviet Union, in the 1980s.

A bipartisan commission made clear during the Cold War that America's global power was intimately connected to its dominant regional position. "The ability of the United States to sustain a tolerable balance of power on the global scene at a manageable cost depends on the inherent security of its land borders," the commission stated. If America had to "defend against security threats" near its borders, it would "have to assume a permanently increased defense burden ... and as a result have to reduce important commitments elsewhere in the world."

There are certainly signs that China has imbibed this same logic because many of its policies seem calculated to establish regional primacy. Beijing has invested heavily in advanced air defenses, quiet submarines, anti-ship missiles, and other anti-access/area denial capabilities necessary to keep U.S. ships and planes away from its shores so that it can have a freer hand in dealing with its neighbors. Beijing has focused on turning the South China Sea and East China Sea into Chinese lakes—for many of the same underlying reasons, one imagines, that the United States was so determined to kick its rivals out of the Caribbean.

Similarly, China has used a mixture of inducement, coercion, and political manipulation in an effort to weaken America's relationships with its military partners and treaty allies. Chinese officials have promoted the idea of "Asia for Asians"—a not-so-veiled reference to the idea that the region should settle its affairs without the meddling of the United States. When Xi and his advisors unveiled the concept of a "new model of major-country relations," the core proposition was that the United States and China could get along if each country stayed on its side of the Pacific.

Finally, the People's Liberation Army has made no secret of the fact that it is building the military power projection capabilities necessary to subjugate Taiwan, a development that would upend the regional balance of power overnight and call the rest of America's commitments in the Western Pacific into question. Some analysts believe that a U.S.-China war in the Taiwan Strait would be—either now or within a few years—essentially a toss-up. All of these policies bespeak a basic insecurity with America's strategic proximity to China. And, of course, all are consistent with the narrower goal of regional dominance. But they are also consistent with what one would expect if Beijing were trying to mimic America's path to global power.

Yet there are reasons to wonder whether this is indeed the path that China will take, if in fact it seeks global superpower status. In international affairs, there is always great peril in mirror-imaging—in assuming that an adversary sees the world the same way that we do or will try to replicate our own experience. This is particularly the case here

PREVIOUS PAGE XI JINPING PHOTO: THOMAS PETER/GETTY IMAGES\

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because it must be apparent to Beijing by now that it will be far harder for China to subdue its regional periphery than it was for the United States.

The United States never faced a Japan—a significant regional power allied to an even greater power—in its own hemisphere, and, for China, getting beyond the first island chain means getting beyond Japan. It never had to deal with the number of rivals—India, Vietnam, Indonesia, and many others—that confront China along its territorial and maritime peripheries. It never had to face a superpower that viewed the United States as its greatest challenge, as opposed to simply viewing it as an annoyance or a lesser rival that should be appeased to ensure its support against more pressing threats. Making a bid for regional dominance risks focusing the strategic competition on a challenge at which the United States typically excels—winning high-end, high-tech military competitions—and simply driving China's neighbors further into Washington's arms. So far, in fact, Beijing's efforts at seduction and coercion have been partially successful in shifting the geopolitical orientation of the Philippines and Thailand, but they have backfired in dealing with Australia and Japan. In short, it is not clear that Beijing can successfully take a regional path to global power—which raises the question of whether there may be a second road to Chinese global leadership.

**WHAT IF, INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON REGIONAL HEGEMONY** before turning to consider global hegemony, China approaches things the other way around? This second road would lead China more to its west than to its east, in service of building a new Chinese-led security and economic order across the Eurasian land mass and Indian Ocean while establishing Chinese centrality in global institutions. In this approach, China would grudgingly accept that it could not displace the United States from Asia or push the U.S. Navy beyond the Western Pacific's first island chain, at least for the foreseeable future. It would instead put increasing emphasis on shaping the world's economic rules, technology standards, and political institutions to its advantage and in its image.

The central premises of this alternative approach would be that economic and technological power is fundamentally more important than traditional military power in establishing global leadership and that a physical sphere of influence in East Asia is not a necessary precondition for sustaining such leadership. By this logic, China could simply keep managing a military balance in the Western Pacific—attending to its immediate periphery and especially its territorial claims through its anti-access/area denial doctrine and slowly shifting the correlation of forces in its favor—while pursuing global dominance through these other forms of power.

Here, Beijing would consider a different variation of the U.S. analogy. U.S. leadership of the international order that emerged after World War II and was consolidated after the end of the Cold War rested on at least three critical factors. First, the ability to convert economic might into political influence. Second, the maintenance of an innovation advantage over the rest of the world. And third, the capacity to shape the key international institutions and set the key rules of global conduct. In traveling this second road, China would seek to replicate these factors.

This would start with the widening ambition of the Belt Road Initiative across Eurasia and Africa. Building and financing physical infrastructure puts China at the center of a web of trade and economic links spanning multiple continents. And the digital component of the effort, the Digital Silk Road, advances China's stated goal from the 2017 Party Congress of becoming a "cyber-superpower," by deploying Chinese foundational technologies, driving standard-setting in international bodies, and securing long-term commercial advantages for Chinese firms. (There are indications that China is even using its head start in recovering from the coronavirus to advance this agenda by claiming additional market share in key industries where competitors are temporarily laid low.) Combining an aggressive foreign economic policy with massive state-directed domestic investments in innovation, China could emerge as the leading player in foundational technologies from artificial intelligence to quantum computing to biotechnology.

As China builds economic power through these efforts, it will sharpen its capacity to convert that power into geopolitical influence. Carnegie's Evan Feigenbaum has identified multiple types of leverage China can use to "lock in its political and economic preferences," ranging from latent and passive to active and coercive. He assesses that Beijing will keep refining a "mix and match" strategy that deploys the full range of these tools in dust-ups with a diverse array of countries, from South Korea to Mongolia to Norway. Eventually, China may well adapt a more systematic ladder of escalation to produce preferred outcomes.

And just as the United States built the key postwar institutions in its political image, this second road would lead China toward reshaping the central political norms of the international order. A number of studies have documented Beijing's full-court press across the U.N. system to both protect narrow Chinese equities (denying Taiwan status in the United Nations, blocking criticism of China) and to reinforce a hierarchy of values in which national sovereignty trumps human rights. And the phrase "sharp power" has now become commonplace to describe China's intrusive efforts to influence the political discourse in democratic countries such as Australia, Hungary, and Zambia. Beijing is also rapidly enhancing its diplomatic throw-weight, passing the United States in the number of diplomatic posts around the world and persistently expanding its influence in multilateral finance, global climate and trade institutions, and other key rule-setting bodies. The Brookings Institution's Tarun Chhabra aptly observes that Beijing's approach to ideology may be flexible but its cumulative effect is to expand the space for authoritarianism and constrain the space for transparency and democratic accountability.

Another key driver of U.S. leadership in the postwar and post-Cold War era, of course, was a robust and resilient alliance system. This is less available as an asset to Beijing. Nonetheless, Chinese leaders have begun establishing a potential network of military bases beyond China's shores, starting in Djibouti. And to compensate for its own alliance deficit, China has embarked on a strategy to weaken and divide the Western alliance structure, cultivating the countries of Eastern Europe and fraying the bonds between the United States and its Asian allies.

All of these efforts come at a time when the United States has stepped back from its traditional role as guarantor of the order. And that may be the most critical ingredient of all.

U.S. President Donald Trump has continued to emphasize traditional military and security investments, which give the United States the ability to sustain its role as a resident physical power in Asia. But he has shown far less interest in meeting the global challenge posed by China—at least in a coherent way. The U.S. response to the coronavirus has been sadly emblematic so far, combining clumsy efforts to remind the world that the virus originated in China with an inept domestic response and a relative absence of the principled international leadership that has traditionally been the best advertisement for U.S. primacy. In the past, one might have expected to see the United States spearheading international efforts to coordinate economic stimulus and global public health measures; one certainly would not have expected the federal government to fail so badly in crafting a national response and disseminating accurate information. For all of the talk of great-power competition, a plausible scenario is that China gradually fills a vacuum left by the United States, with the rest of the world accommodating to a world of growing Chinese power, in the absence of any viable alternative.

It seems unlikely, of course, that a globally preeminent China would forever accept the United States as the dominant power on its maritime periphery. But it could be that reaching for global leadership is simply a way of outflanking the U.S. position in the Western Pacific—of rendering it untenable through the accumulation of economic and diplomatic influence rather than through political-military pressure or confrontation.

To be sure, this path also has its problems. China may well be less capable of providing global public goods than the United States, both because it is less powerful and because its authoritarian political system makes it harder to exercise the comparatively enlightened, positive-sum leadership that has distinguished U.S. primacy. The coronavirus crisis cuts both ways in this regard. The slack U.S. response has surely compounded global concerns about American competence and reliability, yet it has also shown how irresponsibly and offensively China can behave—from covering up the initial outbreak in a way that encouraged its global spread to concocting an absurd story about how the virus originated in the United States to selling defective tests to countries in grave need. Governments in key European countries such as Germany were already getting tired of Beijing's predatory trade practices, efforts to dominate key industries, and desire to suppress free speech in the democratic world by silencing criticism of its human rights practices. In demonstrating the darker sides of the Chinese model, the coronavirus crisis may also encourage greater resistance to Beijing's global ambitions.

Finally, there is an ideological barrier to Chinese leadership. The tensions surrounding China's rise do not simply result from clashing economic and geopolitical interests. They also reflect a deeper, more inherent distrust that often afflicts relationships between democratic

**THE TENSIONS SURROUNDING CHINA'S RISE DO NOT SIMPLY RESULT FROM CLASHING ECONOMIC AND GEOPOLITICAL INTERESTS. THEY ALSO REFLECT A DEEPER, MORE INHERENT DISTRUST.**

governments and powerful authoritarian regimes. This gulf between Beijing's political values and those of the world's democracies means that many countries in Europe and beyond start from a position of unease about China's growing role in global affairs. But none of this means that Beijing won't still try to follow this path—which seems to grow wider and more inviting as the United States sunders its relationships and depletes its prestige.

**ANY "TWO ROADS" ANALYSIS HAS TO CONFRONT THE OBVIOUS QUESTION:** What if it's both—or neither? In practice, China's strategy currently appears to combine elements of both approaches. So far, Beijing has been amassing the means and seeking the geopolitical influence to confront the United States in the Western Pacific as well as positioning itself for a broader global challenge. It is also entirely possible that Beijing won't ultimately travel either path successfully, if its economy or political system falters or its competitors respond effectively.

Yet, either way, laying out Beijing's options is still a useful exercise for three reasons.

First, it helps frame the strategic choices and trade-offs China will face in the coming years. China's resources often appear vast, but they are nonetheless finite: A dollar spent on a carrier-killer missile or a quiet attack submarine cannot be spent on an infrastructure project in Pakistan or Europe. The attention and political capital of top Chinese leaders are also limited. A rising country that faces formidable rivals, and that still confronts daunting internal difficulties, can only take on so many geopolitical and geoeconomic challenges without overtaxing its resources or diluting the impact of its efforts. It stands to reason, then, that figuring out which road to hegemony is more promising will be a consistent preoccupation of Chinese planners—and no less of the U.S. officials who must determine Washington's response.

Second, this exercise helps clarify the strategic challenge the United States confronts. Some leading U.S. defense analysts have argued that if Beijing does not win the military competition along its maritime periphery, it cannot rival the United States globally. This analysis places a high premium on the United States making the military investments and pursuing the technological and operational innovations needed to shore up a balance of power in the Taiwan Strait and other regional hot spots that is already starting to tip.

These investments and innovations are indeed critical. Yet our analysis raises the possibility that the United States could still lose the competition with China even if it manages to preserve a strong military position in the Western Pacific. It reminds us that the softer tools of competition—from providing alternative sources of 5G technology and infrastructure investment to showing competent leadership in tackling global problems—will be just as important as harder tools in dealing with the Chinese challenge. It indicates that it will be just as important to defend U.S. alliances and partnerships from internal decay—hastened by Chinese influence-buying and information operations—as to shelter them from external military pressures. And it offers a warning that investing heavily in the U.S. military while shortchanging diplomacy and foreign aid, hollowing out America's global network of relationships, and weakening or retreating from international institutions could prove to be just as dangerous as failing to strengthen the hard-power military backbone of Washington's presence abroad.

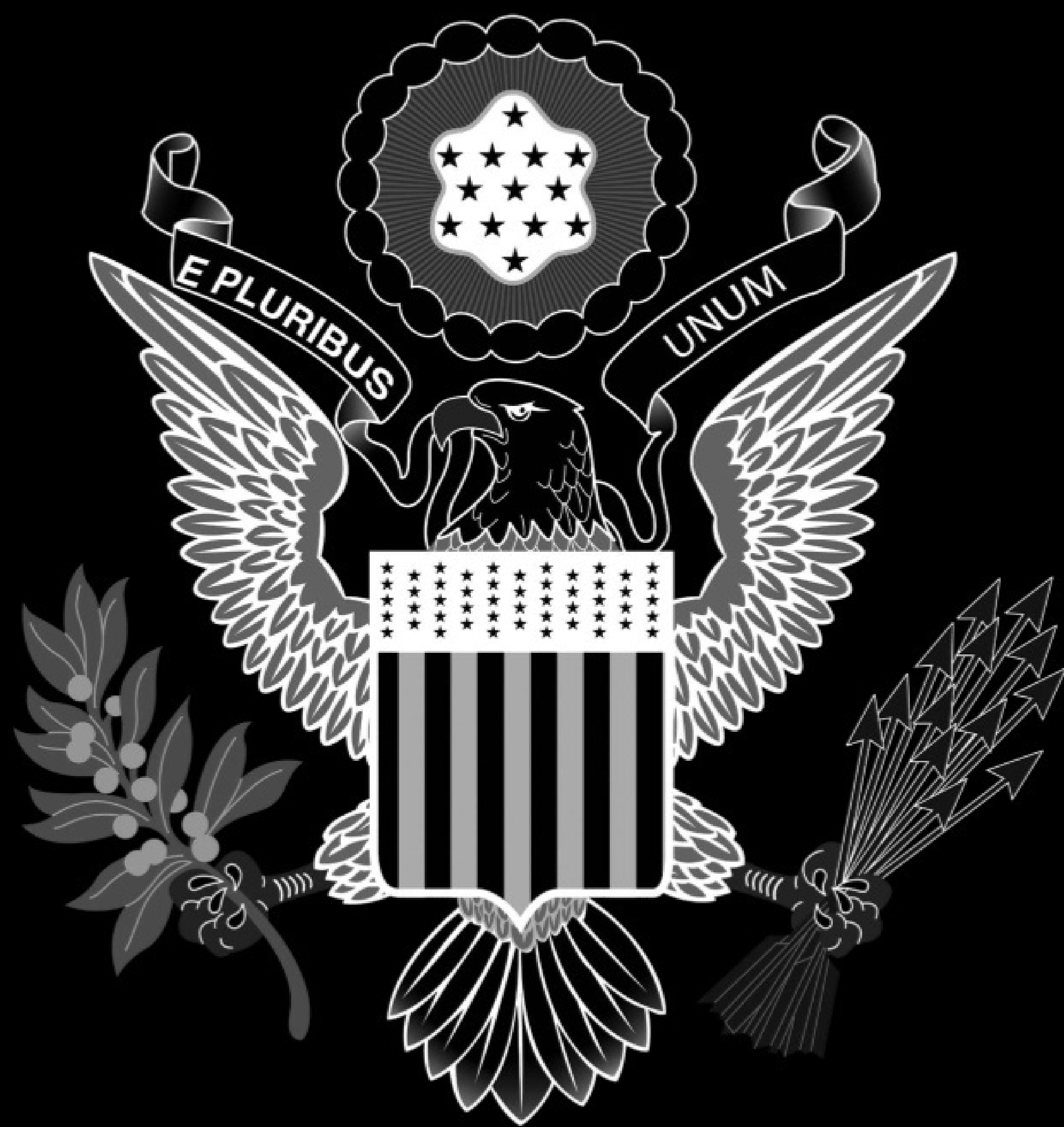
Finally, thinking about China's two roads to hegemony clarifies how the U.S.-China competition will be both similar to and different from the Cold War. Then, as now, there was a central military theater in which the contenders confronted each other most directly: Central Europe. And during the Cold War, the difficulties and dangers of trying to dislodge the United States from that theater led the Soviets to conduct a flanking maneuver. Moscow probed for advantage in the developing world through the use of economic aid, subversion, and ideological solidarity with revolutionary movements; it sought to hollow out U.S. alliance relationships in Europe and beyond through implicit military pressure and political meddling.

Yet the Soviet Union was never a serious rival for global economic leadership; it never had the ability, or the sophistication, to shape global norms and institutions in the way that Beijing may be able to do. Soviet power was ultimately quite narrowly based, which limited the strategic options Moscow possessed. And whereas the United States and the Soviet Union saw the conflict in Manichean terms—good versus evil, victory versus defeat, survival versus collapse—today there is greater nuance in a relationship that combines increasingly sharp competition with a still significant interdependence.

The United States still has the ability to more than hold its own in that competition, so long as it doesn't continue along its current trajectory of self-sabotage. But the fact that China has two plausible paths to preeminence means that the contest will be more complex, and potentially more challenging, than it was during America's last great-power rivalry. ■

**HAL BRANDS** (*@HalBrands*) is the Henry A. Kissinger distinguished professor of global affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. **JAKE SULLIVAN** is a nonresident senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He was a deputy assistant to President Barack Obama and national security advisor to Vice President Joe Biden from 2013 to 2014, as well as director of policy planning at the State Department from 2011 to 2013.

# THE DIFFICULT ROLES OF AMERICA'S BLACK DIPLOMATS




## Protests against racism are putting a spotlight on the U.S. State Department's problems with diversity.

*by* ROBBIE GRAMER



Illustration by FOREIGN POLICY

**ON JUNE 1, AN HOUR AFTER POLICE TEAR-GASSED PROTESTERS** outside the White House to clear the way for a photo-op for U.S. President Donald Trump, a top-ranking diplomat sent an email to State Department employees alluding to police violence and racism that sparked nationwide demonstrations.

"This past week, we have seen the difficult images across our country triggered by the horrifying events in Minnesota. As Americans, it is a difficult moment for all of us," Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun wrote in the note, obtained by FOREIGN POLICY. "To that end, I have encouraged Department leaders ... to open dialogues with their teams and create opportunities to share experiences as we reflect on how these experiences impact our communities and as we strive to represent American values in our work."

The email was meant to send a message to State Department employees that senior leaders acknowledged the challenges of racial injustice and police brutality in the United States after the killing of George Floyd, a Black man who died in police custody in Minnesota on May 25. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo added his own thoughts in an email to employees on June 10—16 days after Floyd's killing—condemning his death as a "tragedy" and saying the country's "civic unrest gives us an extraordinary opportunity to tell our story abroad."

But for some State Department officials, particularly Black diplomats and other diplomats of color, these messages fell flat. As a broader swath of Americans reckon with racism in a new way, the signals coming out of Foggy Bottom to America's diplomatic corps seem to be more of the same: a belated handful of emails to employees from senior officials calling for fresh dialogue, rehashing stale pledges to diversify the U.S. diplomatic corps, and committing to root out prejudice and bias that have plagued the department for decades.

Floyd's death has laid bare how injustices at home can disarm American diplomats trying to advocate for human rights and rule of law in foreign countries. But it has also resurfaced the painful difficulties African American diplomats face day to day in their jobs advancing U.S. foreign policy.

The nationwide movement that started after Floyd's death has also highlighted how few diplomats of color, particularly African Americans, reach senior positions within the department. Out of 189 ambassadors serving overseas today, only three are African American career diplomats, and just four are Hispanic, according to the American Academy of Diplomacy.

FOREIGN POLICY interviewed nearly a dozen current and former African American State Department officials, who described the racism they faced in foreign countries, as well as the discrimination and prejudice they experienced within the department and the difficulties of promoting American values abroad at a time when they feel under assault at home.

Many said the fragmented and overdue messages coming from senior department leaders after Floyd's death were emblematic of a larger, systemic problem within U.S. diplomacy, which long predates Trump. But they are exacerbated by a president who has inflamed divides in the country and emboldened white supremacists with caustic rhetoric, particularly in the wake of the 2017 Charlottesville protests, in which an anti-racist protester was killed.

Some of the diplomats who spoke to FOREIGN POLICY said they were so dejected by the administration's response to the latest wave of protests that they were considering quitting the foreign service altogether. Others feel an obligation to stay, out of a sense of patriotism and the urgent need to ensure that minority voices within the department are still part of diplomatic discussions.

"I think that a lot of foreign service officers of color, particularly Black officers, are at a point where they're just fed up," one official said. "We're dissatisfied, we feel dehumanized, and I think enough is enough. We're not only trying to be acknowledged as Black human beings who are grieving and traumatized and affected by this ... but there is an issue of diversity, recruitment, and retention that they've not taken seriously."

**WHEN DESIRÉE CORMIER SMITH WAS POSTED** to the U.S. Consulate in Tijuana, Mexico, from 2010 to 2012, she faced challenges in the job her white colleagues didn't experience. "I had plenty of applicants come up to my window and say, 'No, I want to talk to a real American,' or, 'I want to talk to a real official,'" she recalled from her days issuing nonimmigrant visas at the consulate.

When she crossed the nearby border into the United States, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers grilled her on whether she was smuggling drugs, asked how she learned to speak English so well, and frequently flagged her cars for secondary inspections—something that U.S. diplomats and government employees are exempted from. It got to the point where she had to carry a special letter from the U.S. consul general, complete with her car make, model, and license plate numbers, to prove to border agents that she was in fact a U.S. diplomat. Even then, unlike her white colleagues, she was accused by border agents of faking her diplomatic passport or papers.

"The harassment I got from CBP was so severe," recalled Cormier Smith, who has since left the foreign service.

Tianna Spears, another former foreign service officer who is Black, recounted in a recent blog post her harsh treatment by CBP officers while posted at the U.S. Consulate in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, from 2018 to 2019. She was subsequently diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and anxiety and ultimately left the department. Black foreign service officers who read the post said it was illustrative of the types of hurdles they faced in their jobs that their white counterparts didn't understand or fully appreciate.

Sometimes, the most blatant forms of racism they experienced came from foreign government officials themselves. When then-U.S. Ambassador to Zimbabwe Harry K.

Thomas Jr. spoke up about the country's prevalent human rights violations in 2017, a Zimbabwean government spokesperson said he and other U.S. critics should go "hang on a banana tree." Zimbabwean state propaganda outlets previously labeled him an "Uncle Tom" and a "house n***** dressed in a fine suit."

Black diplomats said they have also faced prejudice and bias from their own colleagues. They relayed experiences that ranged from offensive passing comments to more overt forms of racism. They recounted times when they were disciplined for things their white colleagues were not and being passed over for promotions in favor of less experienced white colleagues. Some said their supervisors put the responsibility back on them after complaints were filed, tasking them to organize discussions or trainings on racial insensitivities in the workplace.

"They're putting that burden on their Black employees, instead of actually spending the resources necessary to deal with it in the proper manner, and that is so unfair," Cormier Smith said. "To have the added task of trying to educate people on racism and give them solutions on how they can be better is a really heavy and unfair burden."

These challenges are layered on top of an already emotionally traumatizing year for Americans across the country, including diplomats abroad who feel personal connections to the scenes of police violence and racial injustice at home. The deaths of Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery in recent months coincided with the coronavirus pandemic, which has underscored deep-seated racial inequalities: The pandemic has pushed unemployment for Black workers far above the national average, and the COVID-19 death rate for Black Americans is 2.4 times greater than it is for white Americans.

"It's just been one emotional assault after another," one Black State Department official said.

In an email response, a State Department spokesperson said Pompeo "is committed to building a more diverse and inclusive" department, adding that employees "are engaged in hard conversations and discussions in the wake of the killing of George Floyd."

"Department bureaus, offices, embassies, and consulates have been having open and honest conversations that make clear that bias and discrimination must continue to be addressed and have no place in the Department of State. Many actions have been underway to achieve this," the spokesperson added. "The Department's leadership is listening to the experiences of African Americans in the Department with humility and introspection."

**CURRENT AND FORMER DIPLOMATS SAY** the State Department has made some strides to shed its historic reputation as an elitist old boy network—"pale, male, and Yale" was at one time a common refrain to describe the foreign service—through hiring initiatives, fellowship programs, diversity training, and outreach at historically Black and Hispanic colleges.

Two often cited examples are the Pickering and Rangel fellowships, funded each year to bring diplomats from more diverse backgrounds into the department. The department has also ramped up training to tackle bias and prejudice in the workplace. Trend lines point to increasing diversity in the department's new classes of foreign service officers.

Senior officials insist the department is improving its record over time. "I am proud that the composition of our State Department workforce also reflects America's devotion to the principle of equal opportunity. Nearly one-third of our team members are minorities—an all-time high—and 44% are women," Pompeo wrote in his email to staff on June 10. "We'll continue to honor the promise of America by providing opportunities for Americans of all backgrounds."

But additional data shows uneven results.

A February report on State Department diversity from the Government Accountability Office (GAO), an independent federal watchdog, found the percentage of African Americans in the foreign service increased only from 6 to 7 percent between 2002 and 2018. The percentage of African American women in the department's overall workforce, including those in the civil service, decreased from 13 to 9 percent during that time period, and within the foreign service it rose from 2 to 3 percent.

The GAO study also found that racial or ethnic minorities in the State Department's civil service "had statistically significantly lower odds of promotion" than white men.

"The Department of State can always do better. We can all do better," the State Department spokesperson said. "We will continue to address these longstanding issues not only through policies and programs, but also practices and institutional culture, to recruit, retain, and promote to senior positions a skilled, motivated, and diverse workforce that reflects the values of our nation."

As in the military, it takes decades for foreign service officers to climb through the ranks to senior posts, meaning that a lack of diversity in a class of foreign service officers 20 years ago is now playing out in its midlevel and senior ranks today.

In 2008, Black diplomats made up about 8.6 percent of the senior foreign service, the top ranks of the diplomatic corps with senior grades equivalent to generals in the military. The latest State Department data from March shows that 2.8 percent of the senior foreign service identifies as African American and 1.3 percent as multiracial.

The political appointees Trump has brought in to run the department are also overwhelmingly white men.

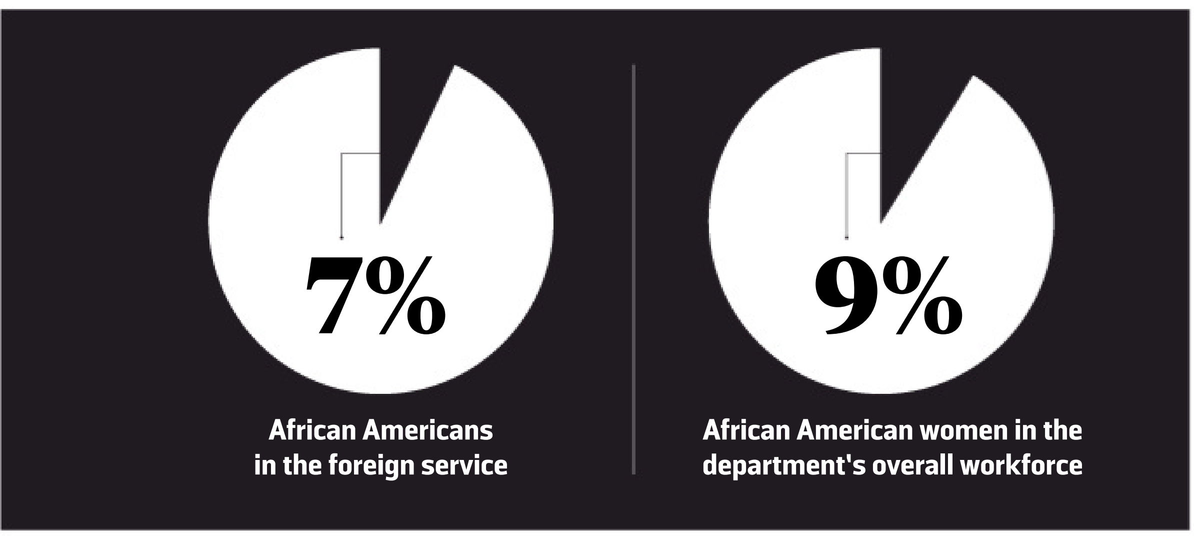
Some strides made in past decades, particularly under Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice—the first and second African American secretaries of state—stopped short when midlevel and senior nonwhite diplomats left the department in recent years. Some left voluntarily, while

others were forced out during an attempt to restructure the department under former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

U.S. lawmakers have called for the State Department to undertake more meaningful reforms. Two Democratic members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Reps. Eliot Engel and Joaquin Castro, wrote in a letter in May that the department "failed to demonstrate any serious effort to address the lack of workforce diversity." When they requested further meetings and information from the department, they said the department refused to cooperate. (The State Department has declined multiple requests for comment on this issue.)

Former senior diplomats say the current divisive political climate fueled by Trump only makes it more difficult to retain a diverse diplomatic corps.

"We made painfully slow progress over the three and a half decades I served, but still struggled to be as inclusive and representative as we should have been," former




Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns told FOREIGN POLICY in an email. "Now the challenge has become much harder, with a President who divides rather than unites, and is so disdainful of career public service."

"I can only imagine how hard it is to serve under these circumstances, but I admire those who persist—especially younger officers who are the future of a more diverse and effective Foreign Service," he added.

Thomas, the former senior African American foreign service officer who faced racist insults from the Zimbabwean government, said the State Department should expand its Pickering and Rangel fellowship programs. He also said the department needed to create more opportunities for nonwhite diplomats to advance through the ranks, particularly in regions where they are underrepresented in the department: bureaus that cover the Middle East, Europe, and Asia. For Thomas, new task forces and internal dialogues on diversity aren't enough anymore: "You can set up all the kumbaya panels you want. But until you see people of color being given these opportunities … nothing is going to change except Band-Aids on surfaces."

Thomas Pickering, a renowned former senior diplomat from whom the Pickering fellowship draws its name, also urged Congress to appropriate funds to expand the program. He acknowledged how difficult it could be for some State Department officials to stay in their jobs at the moment. "This is a tough time. And I recognize it, and telling everybody, 'Just hang in and everything will be better,' is not the answer that these people need to hear," he said.

Still, he encouraged those employees thinking of leaving to stay in the job. "They are essential for the future of the American foreign service, and could they give every consideration to sticking it out … they will be needed."

**THE DEPARTMENT'S LONG-STANDING CHALLENGES WITH DIVERSITY** were evident in its response to the Floyd protests. In the weeks after his death, as protests garnering tens of thousands of demonstrators gained momentum worldwide, senior leaders in the department didn't fully understand the need to issue any public response, multiple officials told FOREIGN POLICY.

Lower-ranking officials, many of whom were diplomats of color who quickly understood the gravity of the protests and potential for political fallout abroad, pushed for more senior officials in Washington and ambassadors abroad to proactively issue statements. Those efforts fell short with some senior officials believing it to be a domestic matter.

Some U.S. embassies were given no direction from Washington for weeks on how to respond to the international criticism and protests coalescing outside the gates of U.S. embassies in foreign capitals, instead only referred back to Trump's Twitter account.

While embassies have agency to issue their own statements without prior approval from Washington, U.S. diplomats say they face heightened political risks of doing so under the Trump administration, lest such statements run afoul of sudden shifts in policy or message from an unpredictable president who views career civil servants with suspicion and disdain. U.S. diplomats have drawn Trump's ire before, including diplomats made to testify in the impeachment scandal. Those who testified received no public words of support from Pompeo.

Some embassies still issued statements of their own volition to make up for the silence from Washington. Brian Nichols, the U.S. ambassador to Zimbabwe, issued a personalized statement tying tragedies in the United States to U.S. commitments on human rights in Zimbabwe that was widely lauded in the diplomatic community. (The assistant secretary of state for African affairs, Tibor Nagy, has not issued any statement.)

On June 3, the department finally set out detailed press guidance with coordinated messages on the matter. That day, the director-general of the foreign service, Carol Perez, sent an email to staff acknowledging the department's shortcomings. "Over the past few days I have read powerful employee testimonies—stories of disrespect, exhaustion, and disappointment."

"These distressing accounts should strengthen our collective resolve; we must do better by our people and by one another," she wrote. She said the department had a task force rolling out a strategic plan on diversity and inclusion from 2020 to 2024.

Some say the messages came too little, too late. "When you're working in a country full of Black lives, you don't have the luxury of turning a blind eye or hiding under a rock hoping no one comes to find you to point out all the hypocrisy," one department official said. "The press guidance was a day late and a dollar short."

Pompeo has framed his messages on Floyd's killing around Chinese propaganda. "We must reject unequivocally the false charges—many of them vile propaganda emanating from China, Iran and other autocracies—questioning America's credibility in promoting human rights and democracy abroad," he wrote in his email to employees.

"Yes, the United States is imperfect. We should always be both proud of what we've achieved and humble knowing there is more to do," he added. "Americans recognize deeply that we must always strive toward, in the words of the Constitution, 'a more perfect union.'"

Many of the officials who spoke to FOREIGN POLICY reacted to these messages with a mixture of anger and disillusionment. Some took issue with the fact that, in his note, Biegun focused on his conversations with new classes of Pickering and Rangel fellows. "Senior officials at the State Department love to mention the Pickering and Rangel fellows. They love to drop that in there to indicate how progressive we are on these issues," said one current State Department official, who is an alumna of one of the fellowships. "Everyone's tired of that. Every alum that I talk to, the fellows themselves, they say, 'Don't just trot us out when you want to make a point work then put us back on the shelf.'"

Others derided Pompeo's statement, saying it missed the mark and questioning why it took him more than two weeks to address employees. "I thought that the overall tone and focus was completely out of touch from the reality that Americans and department employees are facing," one diplomat said.

"It felt like he was more interested in picking a fight with and shifting the blame [to] China than actually addressing the human rights issues here," the diplomat added. "I'm just beyond embarrassed and disappointed."

"He didn't acknowledge that racism is at the center of this, which tells me all I need to know," another diplomat said. "We don't give passes to brutal regimes … elsewhere in the world, even if they say they're 'striving.' Why is this an acceptable excuse for us?"

**ACROSS THE STATE DEPARTMENT, DIPLOMATS AGREE** that racial injustices at home are a major liability for the United States' global stature. Floyd's death and instances of police crackdowns at the ensuing protests sparked an uproar of condemnation from U.N. human rights watchdogs and close U.S. allies, as well as foreign adversaries that have some of the worst human rights records in the world.

Washington has now found itself at the receiving end of the type of diplomatic signals it usually doles out to authoritarian countries. Australia, for example, opened an investigation into U.S. police violence after two Australian news reporters were bludgeoned live on air outside the White House during the protests on June 1. In the United Kingdom, more than 160 members of Parliament petitioned London to stop exporting tear gas and rubber bullets to Washington on human rights grounds.

Many African leaders also weighed in on the violence. "It cannot be right that, in the 21st century, the United States, this great bastion of democracy, continues to grapple with the problem of systemic racism," Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo wrote in a Twitter statement.

Behind closed doors, U.S. diplomats quietly concede that the recent spate of police violence targeting the Black community is sapping America's already dwindling soft-power reserves and making it more difficult for them to call out foreign governments on human rights violations.

"The crux of this issue doesn't rest with any one administration," one official said. "Though not the poster child for diversity, this issue is also bigger than the State Department. This is a deeply rooted issue of national security. How are ethnic minorities in other countries supposed to believe that the U.S. stands with them when they're watching George Floyd's murder on Twitter?"

Former senior diplomats agreed. "It has to be extraordinarily hard for ambassadors to try to explain what is happening in the United States in the context of human rights and justice, where we had been the voice that people have looked to," said Linda Thomas-Greenfield, who was the most senior-ranking African American woman in the foreign service when she retired from her post in 2017.

"If I were an ambassador now, what I would be saying to these countries is, 'This does not represent the America that we had been talking about. This is an aberration, and you should look at the more positive side,'" she added. "Of course they're going to say, 'You're still hypocrites.' And I'd probably say in private, 'You're right.'" ■

**ROBBIE GRAMER** (*@RobbieGramer*) is a staff writer at FOREIGN POLICY

SPONSORED REPORT

# FP GUIDE



# funding Your Graduate Education in International Affairs

GRADUATE EDUCATION SUMMER 2020

**A WISE TIME TO CONSIDER GRADUATE PROGRAMS**

**EXPLORE A MOSAIC OF FINANCIAL AID OPTIONS**

*Photo: Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies students*

The current economic downturn may be a wise time to consider graduate school, to position yourself for your ideal job when the market strengthens and geopolitical priorities and leadership remain critical on many fronts.

In the *Summer 2020 FP Guide: Funding Your Graduate Education*, we explore the "mosaic" of financial aid options available for several master's degree programs in international affairs—and the return on investment for graduates.

You will read some inspiring profiles about current students and recent graduates who successfully financed their education, including one who landed a pre-graduation job at Google and another who is starting a career as a US Foreign Service officer.

The schools described here offer financial assistance to make their degrees affordable. Some examples:

- One hundred percent of tuition and required fees support, plus a need-based living stipend
- Graduate research assistant positions that include tuition support and a stipend
- Financial assistance for unpaid internships
- Scholarships funded by school partners
- Grants to support international research fieldwork and language immersion, to prepare graduates for global careers
- Special one-year grants because of the coronavirus pandemic

See this FP Guide online at https://fpguide.foreignpolicy.com/2020-funding

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

# Advanced Degree Positions Students for a Better Job Market



"Building your skill set and getting your credentials is the smart move now to position yourself for when the economy comes back."

–Sidney T. Jackson, Assistant Dean of Global Enrollment and Recruitment, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University



The current economic downturn may be "a great time to consider graduate school," according to Sidney T. Jackson of Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. "Building your skill set and getting your credentials is the smart move now to position yourself for when the economy comes back."

To help prospective students afford the degree, Johns Hopkins SAIS seeks to understand each personal situation and develop an appropriate aid package, says Jackson, assistant dean of global enrollment and recruitment. "We don't want to saddle students with debt that is going to take a long time to get out of."

The aid includes a variety of scholarships, ranging from institutional aid to scholarships funded by donors. Some scholarships are funded jointly by Johns Hopkins SAIS and external sponsors.

In addition to financial aid, internships are a popular option for defraying educational costs while gaining valuable experience beyond the classroom. Each year at Johns Hopkins SAIS, approximately 75 percent of students in the Master of Arts (MA) degree program complete an internship during the summer between their first and second year. To facilitate internships in the public, nonprofit, and multilateral sectors, where positions can be unpaid, the school's Summer Internship Fund provides financial assistance to students seeking these important experiential learning opportunities. Recent internships included positions at the International Trade Centre, The Nature Conservancy, South Africa's central bank, and the UN Development Programme.

## FROM LITTLE HAVANA TO THE US FOREIGN SERVICE

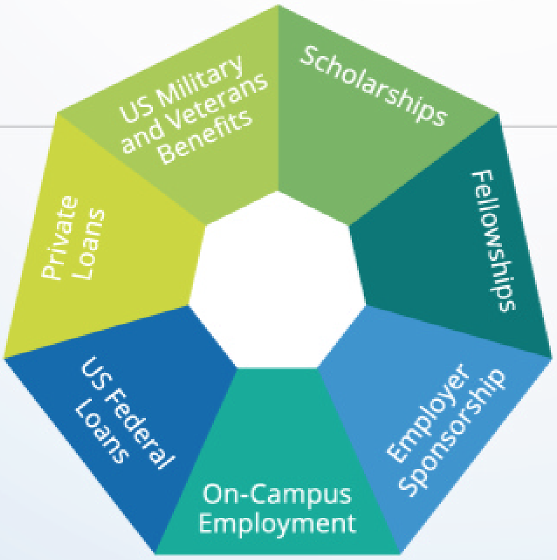



Gricelda Ramos, a second-generation immigrant from Miami's Little Havana neighborhood, has landed a job as a US Foreign Service officer, thanks to a stellar academic career and a Johns Hopkins SAIS '20 MA degree. While earning her BA from Dartmouth College, Ramos studied at Japan's Waseda University as a World Economic Forum Global Leadership Fellow. During her studies at Johns Hopkins SAIS, Ramos interned with the US Department of State. She funded her MA using a Pickering Fellowship from the State Department and a Dean's Scholarship from Johns Hopkins SAIS.

Ramos says she is honored to be one of the few Honduran-Americans in the Foreign Service: "Students of color with similar backgrounds can see that pursuing a graduate degree and serving our country are experiences that belong to them as well."

## TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

The most common mix of aid for Johns Hopkins SAIS students is merit-based scholarships and federal loans.




***Financial Aid***
https://sais.jhu.edu/admissions-aid/tuition-aid
***Contact***
saisfinaidinfo@jhu.edu
202-663-5706

# The World Is Changing And So Are We

Today's global challenges are complex. It is essential for leaders to understand how economics, geopolitics, security, health, and the environment are inextricably linked— exactly what you will learn as a student at **Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)**.

Join us for an upcoming information session and discover how our flexible graduate programs—including fully online courses and degrees—will help you to advance your career.

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SAIS JOHNS HOPKINS
SCHOOL *of* ADVANCED INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

› Washington DC › Europe › China › Online

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME,
KEOUGH SCHOOL OF GLOBAL AFFAIRS



# Generous Grants, Funding for Travel and Research Make Degree Affordable





"We don't expect students to be able to pay for their education in full or repay a lot of loans ... We have made affordability a priority."

–Ted Beatty, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Keough School of Global Affairs, University of Notre Dame

Students at Notre Dame's Keough School of Global Affairs benefit from generous grants that cover much of their tuition and living costs. This past academic year, grants met at least 65 percent of financial needs for all 70 students.

"We have generous donors who have provided funding devoted to student support," says Ted Beatty, associate dean for academic affairs. "The basic foundation for financial aid is very strong here."

Besides funding for tuition, the school has special grants to support the travel or research fieldwork that is needed to graduate. Like many other two-year global affairs programs, Keough requires that students complete a professional internship, Beatty says. "At Keough, we are able to fund students for international work, either during the summer between their two years or during their third semester, as part of their practicum experience."

Students also may receive funding for Keough's language immersion requirement, and more modest financial support for professional development conferences.

The school emphasizes these training opportunities to prepare students for work in global affairs at nongovernmental organizations, and in the public and private sectors, with a particular focus on development and peacebuilding.

"We are interested in attracting the most promising candidates from around the world," Beatty says. "So we don't expect students to be able to pay for their education in full or repay a lot of loans that could prevent them from pursuing their professional calling. We have made affordability a priority."

## SCHOOL RESEARCH PORTFOLIO HELPED HIM LAND A POST-GRADUATE JOB

Mian Moaz Uddin, Master of Global Affairs '19, has been busy assessing the transportation policies proposed by the Democratic candidates for the 2020 US presidential election. This is part of his job as a public policy fellow for the International Council on Clean Transportation in Washington, DC, where he analyzes developments in transportation policies and technologies and authors white papers and briefings.



A portfolio of research and policy projects that Uddin completed at the Keough School was instrumental in helping him secure the job. "I was able to demonstrate that I could knowledgeably conduct research on transport and energy and synthesize that information into policy recommendations," he says.

"The Keough School's generous financial support made it possible for me to pursue a world-class graduate degree in a field I am passionate about," Uddin says.

## ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT: COVERDELL PEACE CORPS FELLOWSHIPS

The Keough School partners with the Peace Corps to offer support to returned Peace Corps volunteers through the Paul D. Coverdell Fellows Program. Returned volunteers admitted to the Master of Global Affairs and selected for the Coverdell Fellowship will receive a full-tuition scholarship for the two-year program.



***Financial Aid***

https://keough.nd.edu/master-of-global-affairs/scholarships-and-stipends

***Contact***

https://keough.nd.edu/master-of-global-affairs/apply
keough-admissions@nd.edu
574-631-3426

**UC SAN DIEGO,**
**SCHOOL OF GLOBAL POLICY AND STRATEGY**

# Tuition Value Meets Employment Opportunity



"Often, students fund their education with a combination of resources. It's really a patchwork."

–Sonja Steinbrech, director of degree program enrollment, School of Global Policy and Strategy, UC San Diego

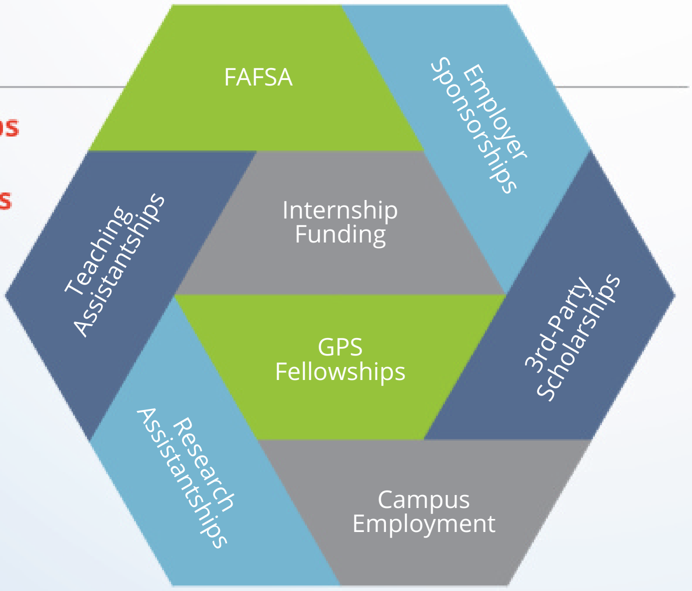


A "mosaic" of funding allows students to afford UC San Diego's School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS), according to Sonja Steinbrech, director of degree program enrollment.

It helps that GPS's tuition and fees are a value compared with private schools, and that students can become California residents and be eligible for a $12,000 discount during their second year at the school.

"Often, students fund their education with a combination of resources," Steinbrech says. Some GPS students win a paid, private-sector internship. However, those who have an unpaid internship in the public sector or with a nonprofit are eligible for aid from the school. About 40 percent of the students hold teaching assistant or research assistant positions on the campus, and if they work at least 10 hours a week, a portion of their tuition and fees is waived.

**Federal loans, assistantships in teaching and research, and merit-based fellowships are just a few of the ways that GPS students pay for their education.**




About 25 percent of GPS students get fellowships. In awarding this merit aid, the school considers factors such as their academic record and experience. "We also look at overcoming adversity and a commitment by an individual to helping communities overcome adversity," Steinbrech says. Most US students who don't receive fellowships take out federal student loans.

GPS also proves its value when students graduate. The California location provides attractive private-sector opportunities. Ninety percent of students are employed within eight months of graduation.

"We're very proud of that number. In comparison to peer schools, we are in the upper portion," Steinbrech says.

## FELLOWSHIP AND RESEARCH WORK FINANCE DEGREE

Lily Folkerts, Master of Public Policy '21, has a fellowship from the Robertson Foundation for Government that covers all of her GPS costs and provides a stipend.



Folkerts also works as a researcher for UC San Diego, which assists in defraying her living costs. She worked previously at the Latin America Working Group in Washington, DC, as a program associate, concentrating on human rights issues in Mexico and the Northern Triangle of Central America. Her Robertson fellowship requires recipients to work for the federal government for three of the first seven years after graduation. The Robertson Foundation—one of many organizations that GPS collaborates with to help students fund their education—also hosts networking events for students and alumni to connect with potential government employers.

***Financial Aid***
https://gps.ucsd.edu/admissions/tuition/fellowships-financing.html
gps-apply@ucsd.edu
858-534-5914

***Federal Loans***
https://fas.ucsd.edu
finaid@ucsd.edu

**PRINCETON UNIVERSITY,**
**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

# Full Tuition Funding Frees Graduates to Pursue Public Service Careers



"Other schools ask you to invest in your education. At Princeton, we invest in you."

–Steven F. Petric, Director of Graduate Admissions, Princeton School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University



Princeton offers a fully funded graduate education at its School of Public and International Affairs for all students, launching them into post-graduate life without the weight of student loans.

"All students receive 100 percent of tuition and required fees support," says Steven F. Petric, director of graduate admissions. "Anybody who is admitted should be able to attend, irrespective of ability to pay. That's a Princeton philosophy."

This opens Princeton's School of Public and International Affairs to everyone, including first-generation and low-income students, and those from families whose finances were shaken by the coronavirus economic downturn.

Students also are eligible for a need-based living stipend. Petric says this means they can be more engaged with learning and all that Princeton offers. "We think of it as an investment in future public servants," he says. "Other schools ask you to invest in your education. At Princeton, we invest in you."

In any given year, about 80 percent of the School's graduates choose jobs in the public sector, including government agencies and nonprofit organizations. Approximately half of each graduating class focuses on domestic issues, and the other half is engaged internationally.

Students also have the advantage of access to a robust network of Princeton alumni dedicated to service and to the broader community.

"Our graduates recognize the investment the school made in their educations and lives and are eager to pay that forward," Petric says. "This is a community that extends far beyond campus."

**100%**

### TYPES OF FUNDING

All students receive 100 percent of tuition and required fees support. All students are eligible for generous need-based living stipends.

### SCHOLARSHIP OPENS OPPORTUNITIES



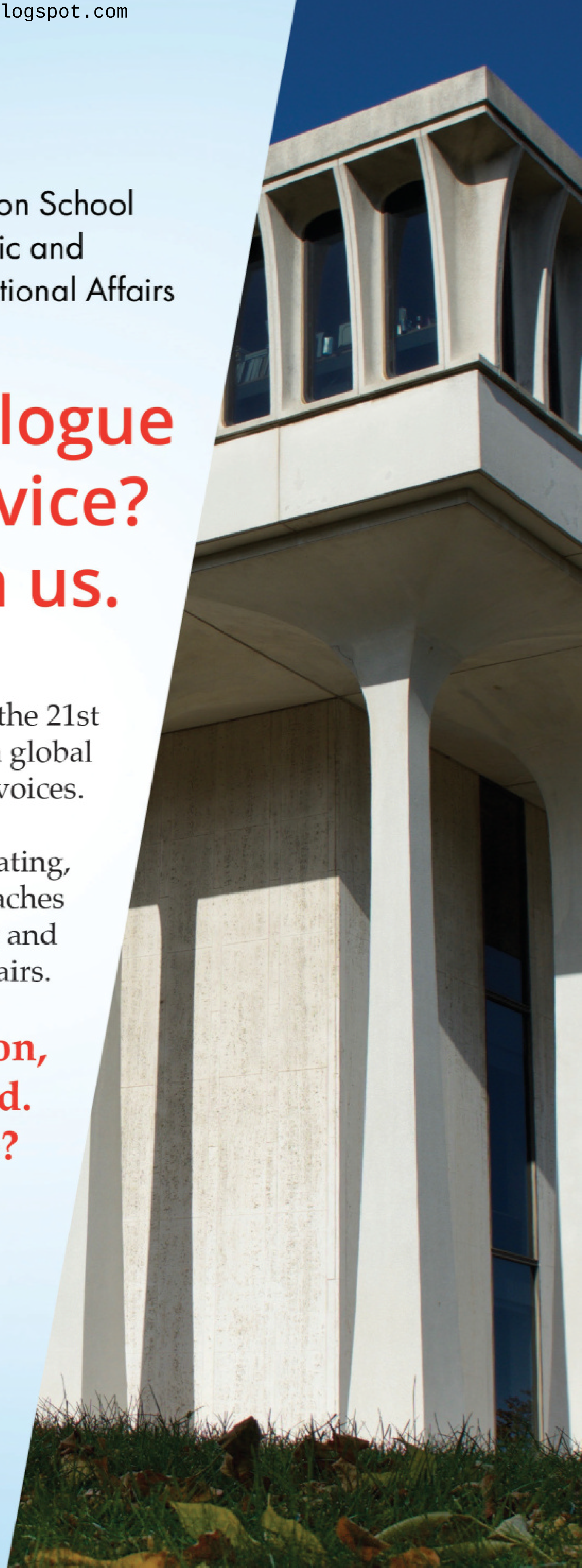
Full funding and not having to work during graduate school opened up opportunities for Marcelo Norsworthy, Master in Public Affairs '18. While at Princeton, Norsworthy pursued a Certificate in Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy and served as co-chair of the annual Students and Alumni of Color Symposium, where he focused on building inclusive movements and strengthening intersectional coalitions.

Norsworthy received full tuition and fees support and a living stipend to cover expenses during his two-year program. In addition, the school financially supported his public-sector summer internship.

Norsworthy now works in Washington, DC, for the US International Development Finance Corporation. "My education at Princeton helped me become more effective and rigorous in public affairs, and the funding gave me the ability to focus my career on public service," he says.

***Financial Aid***
Full tuition funding for all students
spia.princeton.edu

***Contact***
spetric@princeton.edu
609-258-4836



**FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY,
STEVEN J. GREEN SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL & PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

# Robust Online Portal Aids Students in Search for Financial Aid



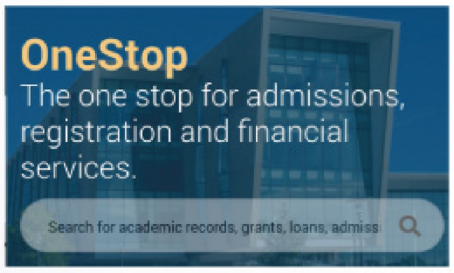
"Feel free to reach out. We have established channels for financial aid, and we're working hard to constantly update the information on our website."

–Jessica Ly, Financial Aid Officer, Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs, Florida International University

In uncertain times, when enrolling in graduate school may seem like a luxury, the Office of Financial Aid at Florida International University (FIU) is well-equipped to assist students who want to pursue a master's degree at the Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs.

"Feel free to reach out," says Jessica Ly, FIU financial aid officer. "We have established channels for financial aid and we're working hard to constantly update the information on our website."

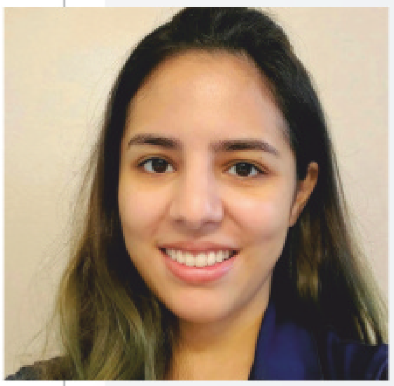
The key to a student's financial aid search is the webpage **https://onestop.fiu.edu**. The online portal provides information about resources that include scholarships, federal and private loans, work-study positions, and paid internships.




The portal also offers information about the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which provides funding that can be used to cover certain expenses, including housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare.

There are two other options for some Florida residents. Residents who attended public in-state universities and received monetary awards from the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program as undergraduates can use leftover funding to cover costs of one semester of graduate school. Residents who are both FIU employees and students may qualify for a tuition waiver that covers the cost of two courses (six credits) per semester.

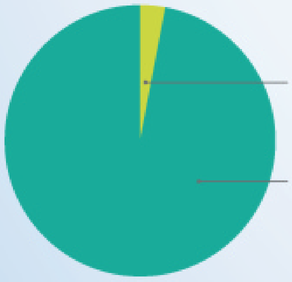
Because of the coronavirus pandemic, the financial aid office cannot offer in-person service, but the staff is "working remotely and as quickly as possible to help students in any way we can," Ly says.



**PAYING FOR GRADUATE EDUCATION WITH A LOAN, JOBS**

Motivated by her interest in Korea and Japan, Amaya Bueno pursued several avenues to finance her graduate education at FIU's Green School. She took out a loan to pay for her first semester and then landed a graduate assistantship, which covered her second-semester tuition and provided a stipend. In her third semester, she was hired for a job in the school's Asian Studies Program. Using savings and the salary from her job, she was able to pay the tuition for her last two semesters. Bueno's hard work earned her a service award, as well as a full-time job as an academic adviser at the Green School, shortly after she completed her Master of Asian Studies degree in 2019.

**TOP TYPES OF FUNDING**



BY CONDITION

Need Based
3.3%

Non-Need Based
96.7%

BY PROGRAM

Grants $.53 Million

Loans $6.97 Million

Scholarships $.60 Million

Several Green School scholarships acknowledge students' interest in politics, history, international relations, Cuban American studies, and more, and can be searched online at **fiu.academicworks.com**.

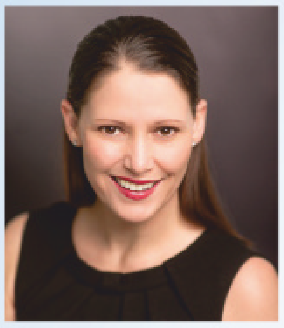
***Financial Aid***
https://onestop.fiu.edu/finances
onestop@fiu.edu
305-348-7272

***Contact***
https://sipa.fiu.edu

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY,
SCHAR SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GOVERNMENT



# Graduate Research Assistant Positions Fund Degree, Provide Cutting-Edge Workplace Training



"It is the best strategic decision you can make financially. It allows your education to be squarely paid for by the school."

–Tonya Thornton Neaves, Director for Extramural Projects, Schar School of Policy and Government, George Mason University

George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government offers an enticing opportunity for funding a graduate degree: graduate research assistant (GRA) positions that are research partnerships with professors. In exchange for their work, students receive tuition support, an annual stipend, and health insurance.

"It is the best strategic decision you can make financially, if you have the opportunity," says Tonya Thornton Neaves, director for extramural projects and assistant professor in the Master's in Public Administration program at the Schar School. "A GRA position allows your education to be squarely paid for by the school."

The GRA program pairs students with professors on important research projects—including some that are particularly relevant in the age of COVID-19. The funded projects give students real-world experience in vital areas, leading to a more defined job search and a better return on their investment in the degree. Another benefit is mentoring by faculty members who are experts in their fields.



"GRAs are such an important partnership," says Gregory Koblentz, director of the school's biodefense graduate programs. "The students are not just mining data; they are not just worker bees."

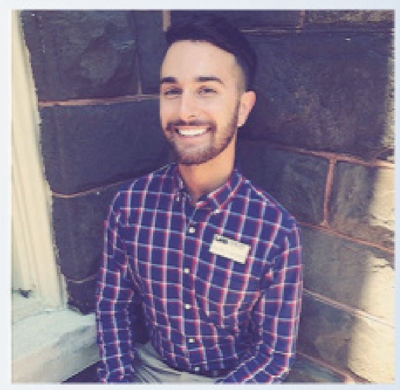
Koblentz notes that he has recently benefited from the GRA program, for example, by partnering with a South Korean student, HyunJung "Henry" Kim, who has expertise in military intelligence and national security. Meanwhile, Koblentz's focus on global health security allows his research assistants to broaden their knowledge of biological threats, including biological weapons—and pandemics such as COVID-19.

## PAIRING EXPERTISE TO ADVANCE RESEARCH IN BIODEFENSE

A former intelligence officer in the South Korean army, HyunJung "Henry" Kim is studying for his PhD in Biodefense at the Schar School, focusing on the use of unapproved medical countermeasures in response to public health emergencies. Leveraging his language skills and background, Kim and biodefense program director Gregory Koblentz are rewriting the history of Japan's World War II–era biological warfare program. Their research determined that Japan's biological attacks inside of China were correlated with Japan's military operations on the ground, indicating that Japanese biological warfare was far more integrated into military planning than previously believed.



## CONDUCTING RESEARCH WITH A RETIRED AMBASSADOR



Charles "Tyler" Goodwin, Master's in Public Administration '21, has an interest in human rights issues and wants to pursue a career in public policy in Washington, DC. The Schar School's location, close to downtown Washington, made it an obvious choice. Goodwin's research included a project connected with the Department of Homeland Security that taught him how a government agency works. Also, one of his research professors, Richard Kauzlarich, is a retired US ambassador. Tonya Thornton Neaves, assistant professor, says, "Imagine the value of that letter of recommendation once he is looking for a job."




***Graduate Research Assistant Positions***
https://schar.gmu.edu/gra

***Contact***
Schar School Admissions:
https://schar.gmu.edu/prospective-students
schar@gmu.edu
703-993-8099
Please indicate your interest in a graduate research assistantship on your application for admission.


EARN YOUR MASTER'S IN
INTERNATIONAL SECURITY
OR BIODEFENSE
PREPARE FOR
TOMORROW'S
THREAT TODAY
SCHAR
School of Policy
and Government
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
SECURE YOUR FUTURE
SCHAR.GMU.EDU

**TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY,
THE BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE**

# Like Its Namesake, School Promotes Public Service



"The most important thing about the Bush School is that every full-time Master of International Affairs student receives some amount of scholarship."

–Dr. F. Gregory Gause III, Head of the Department of International Affairs, The Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University



The Bush School of Government and Public Service offers an avenue to an affordable, world-class advanced degree that encourages graduates to follow the vision of public service embodied by its namesake, President George H.W. Bush.

"We are very much committed to the idea of public and government service for our graduates," says Dr. F. Gregory Gause III, head of the Bush School's Department of International Affairs.

To that end, the school offers financial support that make its competitive curriculum, small class size, and relatively low-cost tuition even more attractive.

"Every full-time Master of International Affairs (MIA) student receives some amount of scholarship," Gause says. "Additionally, those who enroll from out-of-state pay Texas rates, because we issue nonresident waivers to these competitive students."

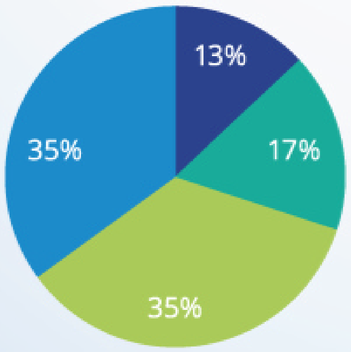
As a premier public institution, Texas A&M University also offers affordable rates. Current annual tuition costs are $13,200 for residents—which all students qualify for with the nonresident waivers—and living expenses are an additional $21,000. The MIA provides scholarships that range from $1,000 to more than $30,000 per year, with an average of $5,000.

Second-year Bush School students can either renew their scholarship or apply for a graduate assistant position. Graduate assistants earn partial tuition support and an hourly wage, working 20 hours per week for faculty or staff (totaling more than $14,000 annually).



These financial opportunities help students participate in their education without accumulating excessive debt. And that is critical for students looking to pursue careers in the public sector.

## AID AMOUNTS GRANTED TO INCOMING MIA STUDENTS, FALL 2020




**13%** $20,000 and more
**17%** $10,000 to $15,000
**35%** $5,000
**35%** $3,000 and less

## GENEROUS SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT LOWERS DEGREE COSTS

With an eye toward a career in international economic policy and finance, Steven Weirich found his sweet spot at the Bush School. "The Bush School was the best mix of everything I wanted in a graduate program," he says. "I wanted a program with a high-quality faculty and specialization in my particular subject area, but it had to be affordable as well."



A Bush School scholarship and, later, a graduate assistant position helped Weirich, of Olive Branch, MS, cover much of the cost of his MIA degree. He graduated this year and now works as an international tax consultant for a Dallas-based company.

"My experience at the Bush School was a positive one," Weirich says. "It was exactly what I was looking for."

***Contact***

https://bush.tamu.edu/prospective
bushschooladmissions@tamu.edu
979-862-3476

**SCIENCES PO,**
**PARIS SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**



# Storied University Offers Less-than-Lofty Tuition and a Range of Aid




"Over the years, Sciences Po has substantially reinforced its financial aid policy, working closely with its own community and external partners."

–Catarina Laranjeira, Assistant Dean for Admissions, Paris School of International Affairs, Sciences Po

As part of a storied university with a history dating to 1872, the 10-year-old Paris School of International Affairs (PSIA) at Sciences Po has relatively affordable tuition of 14,700 euros (about $16,000) per year. This reflects the university's strategic choice to enable the best students to access a world-class education. The school mixes social sciences and hard sciences and is guided by professors and high-profile practitioners—such as former ambassadors and ministers—says Dean Enrico Letta, himself a former prime minister of Italy.



*Dean Enrico Letta*

Sciences Po provides about 11 million euros ($12.1 million) per year in financial aid. In 2019–2020, 90 PSIA students from outside the European Economic Area received the Emile Boutmy Scholarship, named after the university's founder. Based on academic excellence and financial need, this institutional scholarship helps reduce tuition.

Public- and private-sector partners of Sciences Po provide further awards—the Mastercard Foundation Scholarship, the Eiffel Scholarship, the René Seydoux Scholarship, among others—based on academic achievement, socioeconomic background, and course of study. The French government offers scholarships and other aid to attract students from around the world, and students from the United States often use US federal loans.

Internships and institutional work-study arrangements provide an additional financial boost and critical experience for PSIA students. French law requires that internships longer than eight weeks be paid, and 85 percent of PSIA students spend their third semester in an internship.

### WORKING CLOSE TO HIS ACADEMIC HOME

Coming from Cremona, Italy, Michele Bellini was able to pay tuition based on his family income, a benefit offered to residents of the European Economic Area. He covered some expenses as a paid trainee at the European Parliament his third semester, worked part-time for PSIA his last semester, and was one of 60 students who each year organize the school's flagship event, the Youth and Leaders Summit.



"The fast-paced environment, the mix of theory and practice, and the required ability to connect core issues of policy into a coherent picture is very close to the situations we face in the 'real world,'" says Bellini, a 2017 summa cum laude Master in International Public Management graduate. Like 83 percent of PSIA students, he found a job within six months—joining PSIA as executive officer, where he works with the dean on strategic projects.

### TYPES OF ASSISTANCE, 2019–2020

Institutional scholarships make up the biggest share of financial aid offered at Sciences Po, including for PSIA students.




***Financial Aid***

https://www.sciencespo.fr/en/admissions-financial-aid/fees-financial-aid#Financial%20aid

***Contact***

Catarina Laranjeira, Assistant Dean for Admissions:
catarina.laranjeira@sciencespo.fr
+33 145497237

# PROGRAM DIRECTORY

## GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS



*Texas A&M University, The Bush School of Government and Public Service*

**Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies** https://sais.jhu.edu

***Financial Aid***

https://sais.jhu.edu/admissions-aid/tuition-aid

***Contact***

saisfinidinfo@jhu.edu, 202-663-5706

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**University of Notre Dame, Keough School of Global Affairs** https://keough.nd.edu

***Financial Aid***

https://keough.nd.edu/master-of-global-affairs/scholarships-and-stipends

***Contact***

https://keough.nd.edu/master-of-global-affairs/apply, keough-admissions@nd.edu, 574-631-3426

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**UC San Diego, School of Global Policy and Strategy** https://gps.ucsd.edu

***Financial Aid***

https://gps.ucsd.edu/admissions/tuition/fellowships-financing.html, gps-apply@ucsd.edu, 858-534-5914

***Federal Loans***

https://fas.ucsd.edu, finaid@ucsd.edu

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**Princeton University, School of Public and International Affairs** spia.princeton.edu

***Financial Aid***

Full tuition funding for all students

***Contact***

Steven Petric, Director of Graduate Admissions, Global Partnerships and Outreach: spetric@princeton.edu, 609-258-4836

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**Florida International University, Steven J. Green School of International & Public Affairs** https://sipa.fiu.edu

***Financial Aid***

https://onestop.fiu.edu/finances, onestop@fiu.edu, 305-348-7272

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**George Mason University, Schar School of Policy and Government** https://schar.gmu.edu

***Graduate Research Assistant Positions***

https://schar.gmu.edu/gra

***Contact***

Schar School Admissions: https://schar.gmu.edu/prospective-students, schar@gmu.edu, 703-993-8099

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**Texas A&M University, The Bush School of Government and Public Service** https://bush.tamu.edu

***Contact***

https://bush.tamu.edu/prospective, bushschooladmissions@tamu.edu, 979-862-3476

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**Sciences Po, Paris School of International Affairs** https://www.sciencespo.fr/en

***Financial Aid***

https://www.sciencespo.fr/en/admissions-financial-aid/fees-financial-aid#Financial%20aid

***Contact***

Catarina Laranjeira, Assistant Dean for Admissions: catarina.laranjeira@sciencespo.fr
+33 145497237

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**See these schools and more at** https://fpguide.foreignpolicy.com/2020-funding

- **Columbia University, School of International and Public Affairs**
- **Syracuse University, Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs**
- **Tufts University, The Fletcher School**

***Director of Academic Partnerships:***
Sherri Greeves
202-457-7939
sherri.greeves@foreignpolicy.com

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***Editor:***
Katherine Hutt Scott
***Writers:***
Brooks Boliek
Viola Gienger
Katie Lee
Holly Rosenkrantz
***Copy Editor:***
Rachel McVearry
***Designer:***
Cinda Debbink, dgDesignPartners.com

# reviews



BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

## Why Kissinger Still Matters

### Neoconservatism is dead, and liberal internationalism has been discredited. Perhaps it's time to return to the ideas of the great realist.

*By Michael Hirsh*

**YOU CAN HATE HENRY KISSINGER AND THINK HIM EVIL.** What you can't do is ignore him—especially now. So argues Barry Gewen in his incisive new intellectual history of Kissinger and his times, ***The Inevitability of Tragedy***. Indeed, not only can we not ignore the old statesman, who turned 97 in May, but we need him more than ever. To be precise, we desperately need Kissinger's ideas and instincts about how to muddle our way through a world that, we now realize, isn't working very well—and probably never will.

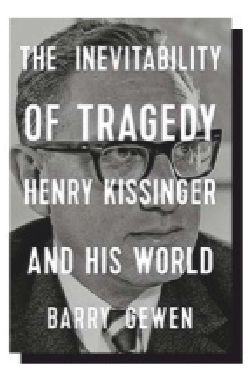
The world, from Washington's perspective especially, has gotten Kissingerian again. America's crusades are over or at best are corroded and crumbling at their derelict foundations. The Wilsonian crusaderism that transformed sensible Cold War containment into a futile and delusional battle against the myth of monolithic communism, ending horribly in Vietnam, and which then reawakened in the post-Cold War era as a

neo-Reaganite call to defeat "evil" regimes, ending tragically in Iraq, has all but exhausted itself. No one wants anything to do with transforming the world anymore—so much so that Americans put a frank neo-isolationist, Donald Trump, in the White House so that he could shut the country off from the world.

The coronavirus crisis has accelerated Trump's agenda, inspiring a new wave of "America First" isolationism, as his trade representative, Robert Lighthizer, argued in a recent essay calling for a reversal of U.S. economic offshoring in response to China's "predatory trade and economic policies" and deceptions over the origins of the pandemic. The Trump administration is even invoking the power blocs of previous eras, mulling the creation of an "Economic Prosperity Network" of like-minded countries that would detach themselves from China. With the 2020 presidential race in full swing, Democrats too are sounding more and more like Cold Warriors toward China, with the party's presumptive nominee, Joe Biden, hammering Trump for his occasional praise for Chinese President Xi Jinping. And as a party, Democrats are questioning as never before liberal internationalist institutions that came out of their own tradition, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO)—largely because of a growing sense of grievance that China has exploited and violated WTO rules to rob middle-class Americans of their jobs.

The United States is not ready for any of this. Certainly, U.S. diplomats have not figured a way out of it. To be sure, the liberal international order and the system of alliances that emerged out of World War II three-quarters of a century ago still exist, thankfully, and we'll continue to make use of them. But mistrust among allies is high, cooperation all but nonexistent, and each country seems inclined to go its own nationalist way. Global institutions like the United Nations and WTO have become meek poor relations at the table, pleading for policy scraps, while Washington, Beijing, and Moscow jostle for a seat at the head. Among nations the great ideological struggles are over—or at least in deep hibernation. Over the course of the past century or so, we have witnessed the debunking of monarchy, authoritarianism, fascism, communism, and totalitarianism, each of them tried and tested to destruction. And now, to a degree, we are also experiencing the failures of democracy, which in so many places seems polarized into paralysis, as in Washington, drowning in memes of misinformation and hacked by malign external forces like Russia. We have also seen how capitalism—though it bested Cold War communism in terms of ownership of the means of production—has proved grossly unequal to the test of producing social equity. The world's chosen system is prone to continual collapse.

Just as significant, American prestige and power are as low as they've been in living memory, especially following Trump's divisive, polarizing first term, which culminated most recently in international condemnation of his brutal approach to the protests that erupted following the killing of a Black man in police custody in Minneapolis. Beyond that, the president's puerile jingoism and fumbling coronavirus response have only completed the road to reputational ruin begun under President George W. Bush. It is difficult now to remember how high American prestige was less than two decades ago, as recently as Sept. 10, 2001—that post-Cold War unipolar moment when the Yale University historian Paul Kennedy observed that the lone superpower had surpassed even ancient Rome in economic and military dominance—and how quickly that went off course. In what was possibly the worst strategic misdirection in U.S. history, Bush and his neoconservative abettors (who are all in hiding now, conceptually speaking) turned what should have been a globally unifying struggle against the international community's remaining criminal holdouts, Islamist terrorists, into an exhausting imperialist game of invasion and whack-a-mole, exposing in the process America's worst vulnerabilities on the ground and in the air. Then Bush did commensurate damage to the U.S. economy, ending in the Wall Street crash and Great Recession. China, meanwhile, rose and spread its monied influence across the world, Vladimir Putin preened and plotted, and the Viktor Orbans, Narendra Modis, and Jair Bolsonaros went their own ways. And Americans, disgusted with how badly they'd been misled, responded first by electing a freshman senator (Barack Obama) who rose to prominence by calling Iraq a "dumb war" and who then vacillated for eight years over U.S. involvement overseas and finally by embracing America First populism.




***The Inevitability of Tragedy: Henry Kissinger and His World***

BARRY GEWEN, W.W. NORTON, 480 PP., $30, APRIL 2020

All this brings us directly back to Kissinger, the great realist Hans Morgenthau (who was his mentor), and the fierce geopolitical urgency of now. Global anarchy beckons, and proliferating great-power rivalries demand savvy, hardheaded strategic diplomacy of the kind that Morgenthau conceived in theory and Kissinger mastered in practice. This appears to be the main message of Gewen's book, which demands to be studied, especially at a moment when Sinophobia is surging and Beijing is giving back as good as it gets. For China today, Gewen writes, is "the Apatosaurus in the room."



Henry Kissinger and U.S. President Richard Nixon confer aboard Air Force One on June 26, 1974.

BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

**THE ANSWER TO THE FUTURE** of U.S.-China relations—and the global peace and stability that largely depend on getting them right—may lie in the past, Gewen suggests. It's no small coincidence that Kissinger and his philosophy had their moment in the sun at a time of U.S. weakness, during the Vietnam War, civil unrest, Watergate, and the stagflation of the 1970s, when diplomats had to find common ground and a balance among the major powers. Because a weakened and disordered Washington may be in an analogous place today vis-à-vis China, Kissinger's favorite subject and the focus of his greatest diplomatic triumphs. In particular, Washington needs a reversion to tried and tested realpolitik that will be deft enough to turn great-power rivalry into a stable and peaceable modus vivendi. As former Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, a scholar of China who has watched Beijing's rise up close, wrote in a recent essay about the coronavirus pandemic in *Foreign Affairs*: "The uncomfortable truth is that China and the United States are both likely to emerge from this crisis significantly diminished. Neither a new Pax Sinica nor a renewed Pax Americana will rise from the ruins. Rather, both powers will be weakened, at home and abroad. And the result will be a continued slow but steady drift toward international anarchy."

> **It's no small coincidence that Kissinger and his philosophy had their moment in the sun at a time of U.S. weakness.**

Yet it is just this likelihood of mutual weakness between the two great world powers that may provide a way out. The answer begins by recognizing and accepting what we face today—which is a permanently gray world. This is hard to accept for Americans, who for several generations since World War II and in the triumphalist aftermath of the Cold War have grown used to unquestioned world dominance. But it is largely this chaotic 21st-century world that Morgenthau, though largely forgotten now except in academia, presciently described in the ur-text of modern realism more than 70 years ago, *Politics Among Nations*, and which Kissinger expanded on in his diplomatic career, as Gewen brilliantly documents in his book. Morgenthau anticipated the present breakdown in the belief about the progress of human society when he said that the rationalists who pined for perfection in human governance and society denied the "inevitability of tragedy," to pick up Gewen's main theme. That is what every great statesman has known—that the "choices he faced were not between good and evil ... but between bad and less bad," writes Gewen, a longtime editor at the *New York Times Book Review* (who, full disclosure, has occasionally assigned me reviews). This describes much of Kissinger's career, including the opening to China, the 1973 truce in the Middle East, even the chaotic and bloody end to the Vietnam War and the thousands of lives lost Kissinger must have on his conscience.

Kissinger, it is true, is not an easy man to restore to good public opinion, as Gewen notes in considerable detail. Kissinger and Richard Nixon oversaw the brutal campaign to force Hanoi to the table, dropping more bombs on Cambodia than all the bombs Allies dropped in World War II, ultimately leading to hundreds of thousands of innocent deaths; that policy, along with their indifference to the 1971 genocide in Bangladesh and apparent support of the coup in Chile, helped provoke a generation of prominent liberals from Seymour Hersh to Christopher Hitchens to label Kissinger a paranoiac and a war criminal. There was always a duplicity about his beliefs and shrouding of his motives—he knew that Americans weren't going to fight to, in his words, "preserve the balance of power." (Gewen notes that Kissinger had concluded as early as 1965, after a visit, that Vietnam was unwinnable but still supported the war.) Gewen tries to place Kissinger in the lineage of German Jewish thinkers who escaped the Holocaust and were haunted by the failures

of Weimar democracy, along with Leo Strauss and Hannah Arendt—though he's not entirely persuasive here, given that some of Strauss's often obscure ideas later inspired the neocons, and another such European refugee from Adolf Hitler, Madeleine Albright (nee Korbel), ended up a passionate hard-power Wilsonian.

But Kissinger's ideas have more resonance now because we are clearly in a place similar to the American weakness in the '70s, when foreign-policy elites weren't thinking of triumph but just survival, as they should be now, especially when America's internal problems are arguably as enervating as they were back then. Perhaps the biggest disappointment of Gewen's book is that after spending hundreds of pages delving into the biographical and historical sources of Kissinger's nuanced, Hitler-haunted realism, the author doesn't apply it much to the present—and only fleetingly to China. Because there is no greater vindication of Kissingerian realism than what has happened in China during the first decades of the 21st century. After a quarter century in which it became fashionable in Washington to think that co-opting China into the post-Cold War system of global markets and emerging democracies would gradually nudge that country toward Enlightenment norms—what Kissinger once archly called "the age-old American dream of a peace achieved by the conversion of the adversary"—such illusions have faded away. All we have left is an emerging superpower that fits Kissinger's hardheaded view of a country he visited some 100 times, dating back to his first talks with Mao Zedong. And if Kissinger's analysis is correct—as it probably is—the United States and China can find accommodation if they work at it, with preaching kept to a minimum.



THOMAS PETER - POOL/GETTY IMAGES

What the post-Cold War triumphalists didn't understand, Gewen writes, is that after the collapse of the Soviet Union we confronted "a world without ideology, in which transcendent prescriptions for democracy were no answers to the problems at hand."

Indeed, it has become far worse than that. We should frankly confront the postmodern reality that all hopes for the perfectibility of society and governance have fallen short; there is no longer any Great Cause to launch a revolution over. Thomas Jefferson's "ball of liberty," which Americans once expected to roll unfailingly across the globe, has ended up in a gutter. The recent Nations in Transit report from Freedom House documents a "stunning democratic breakdown"—in particular pointing to failures in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, saying that there are "fewer democracies in the region today than at any point since the annual report was launched in 1995." History will trundle on, weak Afghan-like states will continue to fail, and democracies and autocracies like the United States and China will remain in contention with each other. But no one should delude themselves any longer that this clash of wills will yield some Great Teleological Outcome—a resolution in favor of one form of social and political organization over another.

As a result, as Kissinger once explained, "Almost every situation is a special case." The new rise of nationalism, he wrote, might seek "national or regional identity by confronting the United States." This is what Xi's China has done. Indeed, many of today's nationalists are responding to Washington as the Soviets once did, consolidating national control by playing up the threat from foreign enemies. And neonationalism across the globe should be dealt with in the same jujitsu manner George Kennan recommended against the Soviet Union: Reduce the perceived threat from the United States, and authoritarian systems like China's are more likely to wither on their own. (Even now Xi may be facing a serious internal challenge; Rudd, in his *Foreign Affairs* essay, writes that Xi's coronavirus response "has opened up significant political dissension within the Chinese Communist Party, even prompting thinly veiled criticism" of his "highly centralized leadership style.") As Gewen notes, Kissinger observed in his 2011 book, *On China*, that even Mao, the Marxist revolutionary responsible for the deaths of millions of Chinese, was no ideologue like Lenin but a "China-first" nationalist and


MANDEL NGAN/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Kissinger with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on Nov. 8, 2018, and with U.S. President Donald Trump in Washington on Oct. 10, 2017.

represented a country that had its own sense of exceptionalist insularity—like the United States—but unlike the Americans the Chinese regime saw little need for missionary zeal and proselytizing abroad. China today is buying influence everywhere. But creating so-called debt colonies around the globe is a lot less threatening than outright conquest.

The key is not to overreact. And the choice is stark for both countries, Gewen writes. "One way or another, either through an intellectual evolution that accepts limits and diplomatic compromise or through the wholesale shedding of blood, they will have to give up their cherished exceptionalism for a Westphalian system of international diversity and a more modest, if uncomfortable, equilibrium." Moreover, Washington and Beijing will need to bring in other major world powers to accept this new balance of power.

Kissinger anticipated much of this outcome, Gewen writes. Decades ago he foresaw that the Reagan era and the Cold War's end would not prove a new beginning for American-style liberal democratic capitalism, as the neocons believed and liberal internationalists hoped, but was more "in the nature of a brilliant sunset." While Kissinger conceded, as always, that Wilsonian idealism would continue to define the heart of U.S. foreign policy, he wrote that even in the triumph of the Cold War—which he admits was partly won by the primacy of human rights in the debate (especially its role inside the Soviet bloc)—U.S. leaders would have to articulate a new balance of power "to preserve equilibrium in several regions of the world, and these partners can not always be chosen on the basis of moral considerations alone."

China too is engaged today in a self-searching debate about how far it can go in global dominance, and the country's long history of geopolitical caution (in deed if not always in word) is encouraging. Amid all this self-doubt and mutual probing of "limits"—one of Kissinger's favorite words—lies the possibility of common ground, even if the two economies decouple in terms of supply chains and financial codependence. For without smart, aggressive diplomacy to find a new balance of power, there is the possibility of a catastrophic, even world-ending misstep. In particular, Kissinger—perhaps the most profound student of the centurylong peace that began with the Congress of Vienna and ended in August 1914—worries about the pre-World War I descent into aggression, an especially scary prospect in a nuclear age. Like many in Washington and Beijing today, Europe's leaders back then blithely thought "risk taking was an effective diplomatic tool," Kissinger wrote.

Now Beijing is lining up armies of bots and billions of dollars against U.S. democracy, and many in Washington are recklessly calling for a new cold war to confront "the imperialists in Beijing" who are "a menace to all free peoples," in the words of Missouri Sen. Josh Hawley, a rising star in the Republican Party. First task of this dangerous new agenda: withdraw from the WTO, under which China has "bent and abused and broken the rules of the international economic system to its own benefit" and cost 3 million American jobs, Hawley said in a May 20 speech.

**THE STAKES FOR SOLVING** the issues between Washington and Beijing are hard for Americans to digest but in their essentials fairly simple: The two sides need to agree to disagree about certain fundamental beliefs, Kissinger says. The Americans will never give up their commitment to human rights and personal freedom, and the Chinese will never stop being mostly focused on maintaining stability in their vast populace, thus giving short shrift to human rights and freedom. On moral and cultural grounds, this is an irreconcilable stalemate. On economic grounds too, there is only the prospect of diplomatic compromise. China has flagrantly stolen U.S. intellectual property and exploited open U.S. markets by flooding them with state-subsidized cheap products—another great failure of the George W. Bush administration was neglecting to invoke WTO "anti-surge" rules to blunt this—and Trump's trade war has made no headway against

such practices. The way forward? Muddle through. Or, as Kissinger put it, find a "pragmatic concept of coexistence" not unlike Cold War-era detente, when a Vietnam-embogged and stagflation-encumbered America was also in no shape to conduct ideological crusades and instead got into bed with Beijing while negotiating arms restraint with Moscow. Keep the pressure on diplomatically but fudge the fundamental issues, as smart diplomats have always done. Because the alternative—constant conflict and war in the South China Sea that could potentially go nuclear—is unthinkable. "Ambiguity," Kissinger said, "is sometimes the lifeblood of diplomacy."

Another issue that both Kissinger and Morgenthau foresaw is that the more populist democracy becomes, the less able it is to conduct reliable foreign policy. Morgenthau, who later broke with Kissinger over his opposition to the Vietnam War, especially saw the effect popular democracy would have on professional diplomacy—an impact that is all too apparent in the Trump administration but also affected the ever dithering Obama and Bush administrations. Kissinger picked up this theme in his 2001 book, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?*, and in a 2018 article in the *Atlantic* that Gewen describes as his "final lesson as a self-appointed educator of the American public." In the growth of cyberspace, Kissinger perceived a "growing anarchy, which he equated with a Hobbesian state of nature in which the prospect of world order receded ever further from view ... and in his mind the computerization of the world encouraged a kind of irresponsible thinking that was deleterious to rational judgment at best, disastrous at worst."

In making this assessment, Gewen writes, Kissinger revealed a side of himself that his many detractors would find hard to believe: Kissinger the humanist. The algorithms and amassing of data in cyberspace—some of it sound, much of it not—threatened to undermine or even destroy good common sense. "[T]he successful conduct of foreign policy demands, above all, the intuitive ability to sense the future and thereby to master it," Kissinger argued. Anticipating future pitfalls, and relying more on pragmatic common sense than providence, is something Americans have to keep relearning. Even the deistic Founders saw Providence on their side, and later American leaders like Ronald Reagan believed themselves to be doing the will of God. Kissinger admired Reagan for his principled stand against the Soviets, but he also ironically referred back to a quote from the proto-realist he so admired, Otto von Bismarck, who said, "The best a statesman can do is to listen to the footsteps of God, get hold of the hem of his cloak, and walk with Him a few steps of the way." Kissinger appealed not to God but instead to a "metaphysical humility," Gewen writes, "an understanding that mere humans would never know all they needed to know as they engaged in the dangerous game of international affairs."

That lack of certainty sounds squishy, but what is worse is to be too hard and unyielding—in a word, arrogant. Hubris, a lack of humility, and an excess of moralizing led to the worst disasters in modern U.S. foreign-policy history, the invasions of Vietnam and Iraq. A close review of the debates leading up to Vietnam, which Gewen delivers in some detail, and the Iraq invasion reveals the lamentable extent of overconfidence among U.S. policymakers in the God-given righteousness of America's cause. (The infamous phrase with which Bush made his final case for the Iraq invasion was, "The liberty we prize is not America's gift to the world; it is God's gift to humanity.") Did Reagan win the Cold War, as many conservatives believe? Even Kissinger has acknowledged that Reagan's confrontational approach, as opposed to detente, "had much to recommend it." But mainly Reagan was lucky; he was the man who was in the room when 40 years of strategic patience—the policy of containment—paid off. (Reagan himself must have known how lucky he was, since he was still desperately trying to negotiate arms reduction with Moscow, much to the consternation of the hard-liners in his own second term, even as the Soviet system was collapsing internally.) Kissinger himself foresaw as well as anyone that slow and steady would eventually win the Cold War race, and even Kennan, the father of containment, once remarked that Kissinger "understands my views better than anyone at [the State Department] ever has."

In the end, the choice in front of us is not as difficult as we may think. Kissinger lamented Wilsonianism's excesses but conceded that it still formed the bedrock of American foreign policy. And a consensus is possible if the Wilsonians accept that American sovereignty and hard power will always be sacrosanct and the America Firsters accept that the liberal international order the United States created, flawed as it is, will remain far more a protector than an antagonist, not least because it has gained majority consensus in the world and helps take the raw edge off Washington's still dominant military power, preventing would-be rivals like Beijing and Moscow from forming alternative power blocs. Striving openly for U.S. hegemony just won't work, Kissinger has written, because no international order can survive if it isn't viewed as just: "The dominant trend in American foreign policy thinking must be to transform power into consensus so that the international order is based on agreement rather than reluctant acquiescence." Ragged though its dominance is, the United States, as chief author of this international order, still has the upper hand here. Or as Kissinger wrote: "Our goal should be to build a moral consensus which can make a pluralistic world creative rather than destructive." The task is all the greater today. ■

**MICHAEL HIRSH** (*@michaelphirsh*) is deputy news editor and senior correspondent at FOREIGN POLICY.



# A Portrait of India on Fire

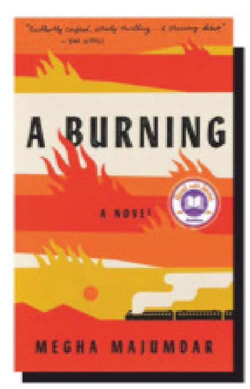
## Megha Majumdar's bestselling novel *A Burning* begins with a train in flames. But what really gets torched is the Indian Dream. *By Ravi Agrawal*

I

**"IS IT A CRIME TO WRITE SOME WORDS ON FACEBOOK?"**

So asks Jivan, the young protagonist of Megha Majumdar's powerful debut novel, ***A Burning***, after she is falsely accused of collaborating with a terrorist on social media. More than a hundred people have been killed in an attack at a train station near her slum in Kolkata, and tensions are running high. Given what befalls her, Jivan could have put her question another way: Is it a crime to be born into a poor family in India? To be a Muslim? To be a woman? To imagine a better life, powered by her meager salary as a retail clerk and animated by her new smartphone?

Of course, Jivan's Facebook post, which starts the novel, was ill-advised—especially given the realities of today's India, with its surge of nationalism and growing suppression of free speech. "If the police didn't help ordinary people like you and me, if the police watched them die, doesn't that mean that the government is also a terrorist?" she writes. Whatever




***A Burning***

MEGHA MAJUMDAR,
KNOPF, 304 PP.,
$25.95, JUNE 2020

Illustration by AJ DUNGO

the police and the government actually are, they know a good scapegoat when they see one. They arrest Jivan, charge her with sedition, and lock her up as the Indian public and a jingoistic media bay for the death penalty. (It's surely no accident that Majumdar, who grew up in Kolkata, gave her character a name that means "life" in Bengali.)

And so begins Majumdar's takedown of the notion of the Indian Dream—the promise of social mobility, if not riches, in one of the world's most class- and caste-bound societies—peddled by the current government under Narendra Modi and parroted by most Indian TV news channels.

Take Jivan, an impoverished Muslim slum-dweller. Even before she was locked up, she had little chance of rising. (She once sees a man in a clean shirt and shined shoes and wishes she could be rich like him. But she realizes: "He wasn't rich, of course. Later I learned that what he was, was called middle class.") As Jivan recounts her life story to a corrupt reporter while sitting in jail, Majumdar's prose comes alive, taking us inside the mind of a woman who *thinks* she has agency but whose life was doomed from the start. Every aspect of the Indian system betrays her: the police, social services, real estate agents, doctors, and more. Jivan naively details her innocence to the press in the hope that she will get a fair hearing.

Fat chance. The only good thing that has ever happened to Jivan is that an NGO sponsored her education at an all-girls private school. Education was supposed to grant her a passport to a better life—the ability to speak English. But life intervened: After passing her 10th grade examinations, Jivan dropped out to support her parents. Jivan's mother forages for fish and vegetables at an illegal night market and runs a tenuous business selling bread and curries outside the family shack. Her father, suffering permanent injuries from an act of police brutality, mostly lies supine at home.

For someone with so little, Jivan has much to give. Before being jailed, she spent her spare time giving free English lessons to an aspiring actress named Lovely. Lovely is a *hijra*—part of a community of mostly eunuchs but also intersex and transgender people who are both revered and reviled in Indian society for their supposed ability to bless or curse babies and newlyweds. They are often paid for their services, but it is common to see them begging at markets and on the streets. Hijras dress in colorful saris and are known to belt out bawdy songs. Majumdar masterfully translates Lovely's voice—and her Bollywood dreams—by writing her dialogue in the present continuous tense and maintaining the singsong rhythms of Bengali:

> I am going to a room and standing nervously in front of not a theoretical camera but a real camera. It is balanced on top of a tripod, and there is a blinking red light on it. The man with sleepy eyes is standing behind it, and even though I am not liking him and he is not liking me, I am feeling like a real actress. I am looking at the lens and knowing—through this lens, someday I am reaching a thousand people, a million people.

PT Sir, Jivan's onetime gym teacher, completes a triptych of primary characters. The daily grind of school life, and the taunts and giggles of schoolgirls who are clearly richer than he is, wears him down. But soon PT Sir—his sobriquet comes from his job teaching physical training—begins to muster some character and starts climbing the ranks of a regional right-wing political party. Majumdar transports us into his mind:

> He lies with his head on his thin pillow and wonders why his wife cannot tolerate something exciting that is happening in his life. She is annoyed, he feels, because he didn't have much of an appetite for the yogurt fish she cooked. She is annoyed because he filled his belly with store-bought biryani. But he is a man! He is a man with bigger capacities than eating the dinner she cooks.

**Majumdar's novel takes us inside the mind of a woman who thinks she has agency but whose life was doomed from the start.**

Will Jivan get a fair trial in the Indian legal system? Spoiler alert: Of course not. The stories of the three main characters and the buildup to the moment when we learn Jivan's fate make for a real page turner—even when the outcome seems obvious all along. PT Sir, given the chance for some redemption, spurns the opportunity to say anything good about his former student when he is called to the witness stand. While Lovely at least tries to defend Jivan, the judge dismisses "the word of a hijra." Later, on the cusp of video stardom, even Lovely agrees to appease her studio and drop her politically damaging support for Jivan. In Majumdar's India, everyone has a price.

**WHAT MAKES MAJUMDAR'S NOVEL** so compelling, timely, and propulsive—the new word "doomsurfing" comes to mind—is that Jivan's predicament, at least initially, is quite plausible in modern-day India. (Disclosure: I first met Majumdar in Kolkata, our shared hometown, some 14 years ago, and we have stayed loosely in touch ever since.)

Press freedom is dying as Modi's government punishes prominent journalists for their work.

Publishers rein in criticism of the authorities for fear of losing advertising, on which most of the media relies. Mainstream news outlets have become

largely pliant, accepting the fact that Modi has reigned for six years without holding a single press conference. Since 2009, India has dropped 37 places in Reporters Without Borders' annual press freedom rankings. But it's not just professional writers who have suffered. A growing number of citizens—like the fictional Jivan—have been arrested or jailed for posting comments critical of their elected leaders. The police, especially in states controlled by Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, feel emboldened to defend their government and act accordingly.

Sometimes that means looking the other way. In March, as protests grew in New Delhi over a controversial citizenship law that discriminated against Muslims, the city's police stood by as mobs of Hindus demolished Muslim homes and businesses. For several years, and increasingly under Modi, the police have also turned a blind eye to vigilante groups that roam suburbs and villages looking to punish, sometimes by lynching, Muslims who are suspected of killing cows.

In today's India, cruelty has become banal. Consider that in March, when New Delhi suddenly announced a nationwide lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, the government seemingly gave no thought to the roughly 140 million migrant and daily wage laborers who would be stuck in India's cities. Desperate and unable to make ends meet, most set off on foot for their villages. (Many also carried the coronavirus with them, accelerating the spread of the pandemic.)

Majumdar's characters narrate several such crimes against the country's poor and voiceless, many based on real events. At one point, PT Sir, now a political figure, is giving a campaign speech in a village when a rumor erupts that a Muslim man is keeping beef in his fridge—a story that mirrors a real incident in a village near New Delhi in 2015. A Hindu mob breaks into his house, rapes his wife, and kills him.

**_A Burning_ is not just a critique of modern Indian society but a universal parable on inequality.**

Majumdar cleverly places the smartphone at the center of some of the novel's key themes. After all, it is only with the proliferation of cheap smartphones that nearly half of the country's population has come online. For most Indians, the smartphone is not only their first internet device but also their first computer and their first camera, a democratizing force that allows them to be digital citizens even if they are not English speakers. The smartphone is the embodiment of the new Indian Dream: It is a potential tool of empowerment, and even employment, for a rising and entrepreneurial generation.

This fact is what makes Majumdar's takedown more devastating. Jivan's first major purchase is a smartphone, which she uses, among other things, to read people's comments on Facebook. As she does, she marvels to herself that their carefree speech seems the very definition of freedom. Facebook's algorithm, and her desire for a few extra likes, is what pushes her to type in the words she admits "nobody like me should ever think, let alone write." When rumors and so-called fake news spread in India, they proliferate on WhatsApp—a messaging app owned by Facebook and used by more than 400 million Indians. It is no exaggeration to say that Facebook is the largest and most powerful purveyor of misinformation in the world's largest democracy.

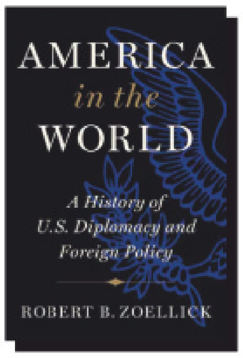
The very things that are supposed to propel and then gird Jivan's success according to India's boosters—cheap technology, democracy, the justice system, and the police—help spell her downfall. The mirage of hope makes her eventual disappointment even more acute.

Majumdar's timing is either extremely lucky or remarkably prescient. Her book is soaring up the global bestseller lists thanks in part to its resonance with this summer of discontent and despair, a time when public trust in leadership and Big Tech is dwindling.

One reason why *A Burning* should appeal to readers unfamiliar with India is that the novel is not just a critique of modern Indian society but a universal parable on inequality. Systems promise much but turn out to be broken. Social mobility is exposed as a myth. Hope is an illusion. Rage is only natural. Jivan's story of betrayal by the country of her birth could resonate with Black Americans, as protests over the killing of George Floyd have lighted up the world's cities.

*A Burning* will attract critics, especially in India, who will say its portrayal of the country is too bleak. And they will have a point. For all its flaws, India has more resilient checks and balances—and at least some redeeming features—than the novel lets on. The country's legal system, for example, would almost certainly have moved Jivan's case to a higher court for greater scrutiny. And its civil society, which has displayed a heartening resistance to government overreach and social injustice in recent years, doesn't get a mention. In that sense, Jivan's story can seem a bit contrived. But the role of the novelist is to take artistic license, to not just describe how things are but warn how they could be. That's what makes *A Burning* such essential reading. If Majumdar has tapped into the fury of the moment, it's because her novel brilliantly explores some of the sources of the helplessness so many people currently feel. And we must listen to those people, because for many of them, the only way forward seems to be to burn it all down. ■

**RAVI AGRAWAL** (*@RaviReports*) is the managing editor of FOREIGN POLICY.




## *America in the World: A History of U.S. Diplomacy and Foreign Policy*

ROBERT B. ZOELLICK, TWELVE, 560 PP., $35, AUGUST 2020

**AFTER MORE THAN THREE YEARS** of watching U.S. President Donald Trump turn his back on alliances, the international order, free trade, and human rights, it's tempting to view his foreign policy as an aberration.

In reality, as Robert B. Zoellick shows in this wide-ranging, highly readable account of 200 years of U.S. diplomacy and foreign policy, the United States' engagement with the world has always been a dance between two conflicting imperatives: the continent-sized pull of the ongoing national experiment and the belief that American exceptionalism can remake the world.

That tug of war has led to seemingly abrupt departures in U.S. foreign policy over the years. John Quincy Adams vowed that America "goes not abroad, in search of monsters to destroy," yet much of modern U.S. history is littered with the bones of those very monsters; a country that famously swore off, in Thomas Jefferson's words, "entangling alliances" would one day end up with more allies than any other.

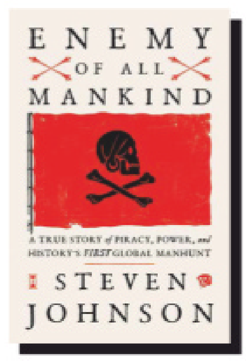
If the story of U.S. foreign policy seems helter-skelter, Zoellick suggests that it has something to do with the way diplomats think about their place in the world. Unlike many European traditions that girded diplomacy in theory (and that colored the views of such Europe-focused luminaries as Henry Kissinger), U.S. foreign policy has usually been the preserve of pragmatists.

"Over two hundred years, U.S. diplomacy has sought out what works, even if practitioners stumbled while discovering what they could accomplish," Zoellick writes.

Zoellick, a former senior U.S. State Department and trade official in the George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush administrations (and later head of the World Bank), is a pragmatist himself and offers a sympathetic take on those like him who came before. The great strength of *America in the World* is its emphasis on those very practitioners—the book focuses on the personalities of men (and it's all men) such as Jefferson, William Seward, and Theodore Roosevelt and how they grappled with new problems as the nation grew and its place in the world evolved. The cast isn't limited to the most recognizable names, though. Some of the best sections of the book shine a light on the groundbreaking work of lesser-known men such as Elihu Root, who helped embed the United States in a system of international law, and Charles Evans Hughes, whose efforts after World War I to limit a naval arms race created the template for modern arms control.

Regrettably, given Trump's disruptive diplomacy and current questions about America's place in the world, Zoellick's survey largely leaves out the last quarter century. He briefly describes the surprising continuities between the foreign policies of Barack Obama and Trump, highlighting the contrast with their predecessors. But the book's focus, by design, is on history that's already in the books, not still being written.—*Keith Johnson*

**BOOKS IN BRIEF**




## *Enemy of All Mankind: A True Story of Piracy, Power, and History's First Global Manhunt*

STEVEN JOHNSON, RIVERHEAD BOOKS, 304 PP., $28, MAY 2020

**IN THE INDIAN OCEAN IN SEPTEMBER 1695,** an English frigate approached a well-armed treasure ship laden with precious metals, gems, and spices. The frigate's captain was Henry Every, a notorious English pirate. The treasure ship belonged to Aurangzeb, ruler of the Mughal Empire and one of the most powerful men on Earth. Every was outmanned and outgunned in almost all respects, but he and his not-so-merry band of pirates nonetheless succeeded in disabling and capturing Aurangzeb's ship. The daring raid set in motion a chain of events that transformed the British Empire, enabled its hold on India, and laid the foundation for modern trade.

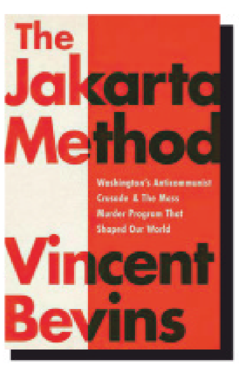
Every's voyage is one of those rare examples where scholars can trace a key inflection point in history back to a single place and time. Steven Johnson maps out this little-studied moment, its aftermath, and the repercussions in his compelling page turner *Enemy of All Mankind*.

Every's raid on Aurangzeb's treasure ship became the most notorious crime in its day—not least because the ship was also carrying women, including members of the royal court and possibly one of the ruler's daughters. Returning from a pilgrimage to Mecca, the women met a grimmer fate than many of the surviving men on board. The crime sparked the first global manhunt and an existential crisis for England's East India Company, then nearing its centenary and faltering. Caught between a backlash in Lon-

don and the furious Aurangzeb, the company's managers managed to seize the crisis as an opportunity to reset relations with both the Mughal Empire and England—a reset that would eventually turn the East India Company into the ruthless corporate and military juggernaut that subjugated the entire Indian subcontinent.

Conventional wisdom holds that it was not until the Battle of Plassey in 1757 that Britain's course to ruling India was set. But Johnson, drawing on the work of scholars before him, convincingly argues that Every's raid marks the turning point instead. It was then that the Mughal ruler first agreed to outsource the protection of his sea trade to the East India Company, the catalyst for the company to build a private military that would eventually vanquish the Nawab of Bengal at Plassey. And it was then that England's Parliament finally swore off piracy (though not privateering against rival European powers), laying the groundwork for a secure system of global trade.

Johnson's book is a fast-paced, engrossing work of narrative nonfiction. The counterfactuals he explores throughout are convincing enough to consider that the British Empire, India's history, and the world's trade system would have taken a very different course had it not been for Every's fateful pirate raid.—*Robbie Gramer*




## *The Jakarta Method: Washington's Anticommunist Crusade and the Mass Murder Program That Shaped Our World*

VINCENT BEVINS, PUBLICAFFAIRS, 320 PP., $28, MAY 2020

**TOWARD THE END OF VINCENT BEVINS'S** *The Jakarta Method*, one character describes America as "the land of the great amnesiac." As protests against racism force the United States to grapple with its past, the book is a timely reminder that the history of U.S. foreign policy contains its own dark chapters.

Bevins focuses much of the book on Indonesia, a country he knows well from his time as a Southeast Asia correspondent for the *Washington Post*. He charts the country's first steps as a postcolonial democracy in 1950 to the U.S.-supported military rebellion in 1965 and ensuing bloodbath that cost the lives of an estimated 1 million Indonesians. Along the way, Bevins gives a concise account of how U.S.-supported carnage in Indonesia inspired other countries to unleash their own murderous suppression of left-wing movements.

By focusing on Indonesia and nations not aligned with either the United States or the Soviet Union, Bevins goes beyond the typical Cold War history of arms races and intrigue. And as his account makes clear, the U.S. victory involved blood. Unfathomable volumes of blood.

The book comes alive most vividly in Bevins's account of the anti-communist purges that followed the 30 September Movement, a suspiciously botched kidnapping and execution of Indonesian military leaders in 1965. In Bevins's telling, the anti-communist terror campaign was an outgrowth of a strategy Washington had adopted as a check on nonaligned countries: funding a country's military class as a bulwark against communist activity and actively supporting the faction when it struck for power. Bevins tells of U.S. intelligence agents gladly providing kill lists of suspects as the Indonesian military systematically combed the country. The events served as a blueprint for crackdowns in other places: Bevins found that right-wing governments and movements in at least 11 countries used "Jakarta" as a code word for the murderous suppression of leftists.

Although the descriptions of mass murder are harrowing, they become even more chilling through Bevins's intimate account of the book's main characters. There is still room for quirky anecdotes of CIA bungling, however—such as a pornographic film co-produced by Bing Crosby that involved a look-alike of Indonesian President Sukarno and was intended to discredit the charismatic leader. (Don't try to find it on YouTube—the project was shelved.)

As Bevins effectively describes, we are still living in the world created by these anti-communist purges. In the United States, politicians mobilize older voters by exploiting their fear of socialism. In South America, the legacy is even clearer: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro's resurrection of the ghosts of communism in no small part enabled his rise to power. When Bolivia's leftist president, Evo Morales, was deposed and replaced by an ultraconservative, unelected leader last November, it was hailed by Washington as an assertion of democratic will.

Three decades after the end of the Cold War, Bevins's account raises necessary questions. Did the anti-communist mania of the 20th century make the world any safer? And if so, for whom?—*Colm Quinn*

**KEITH JOHNSON** (*@KFJ_FP*) is a senior staff writer, **ROBBIE GRAMER** (*@RobbieGramer*) is a staff writer, and **COLM QUINN** (*@colmfquinn*) is a newsletter writer, all at FOREIGN POLICY.

# Empire's Little Helper

## Chinese history shows that where soldiers march, plague follows.

*By Peter C. Perdue*




**EMPIRES ARE BIG AND MICROBES SMALL,** but both have shaped history by conquering territories and bodies, leaving death, disease, and devastation in their wake. Yet humans have survived many such onslaughts and brought, at hard-won cost, peace, knowledge, and protection.

Conquerors such as the Romans in Britain or the Mongols in China first massacred local people who were not yet "immune"—that is to say, submissive. Huge numbers of people died, but afterward rulers and subjects worked out an accommodation where regular taxation replaced mere plunder. In the same fashion, diseases settled into an arrangement with humanity. The initial casualties as new viruses and bacteria emerged from the wilderness died down as immunity developed or diseases became less lethal, allowing a mutual, if uneasy, existence.

Disease and empire also marched together. In the *Imperially Commissioned Golden Mirror of Medical Learning*, a Chinese medical encyclopedia published in 1742, infectious disease marks the page. Illustration after illustration details the ravages of smallpox, a longtime scourge that Chinese armies would carry into other states: "swallow's nests" of pustules clustered together, "crab claws" of marks dense at the top but light at the bottom, "mouse tracks" of pustules trailing across flesh.

The text was commissioned by the Qianlong emperor himself, to "rectify medical knowledge" throughout the empire, and compiled over three years by a dedicated group of 80 doctors and officials, from imperial physicians to student copyists. Over a hundred pages are devoted to smallpox alone. China knew the disease well. Doctors had been describing it since the 15th century, and the Chinese led the way in developing a partially effective vaccine known as variolation, by inserting scabs from infected people into the nostrils of the rest of the population.

Until the 17th century, smallpox remained confined to China, as Central Eurasia was nearly walled off from Chinese contact. The Manchus, however, who conquered the Ming dynasty in the mid-17th century and became masters of China as the Qing dynasty, extended their rule into Mongolia. The Qing rapidly familiarized themselves with the most modern techniques to fight the disease, including variolation. When the Manchus invited their Mongol allies to visit, they met them in a summer palace in Manchuria, not in Beijing, and even practiced social distancing as best they could. Qianlong, the fourth Qing ruler, was clearly happy with the results of the encyclopedia; he heaped gifts and new offices on the writers, including a detailed manikin showing key acupuncture points.

The Dalai Lama in Tibet also knew of smallpox's danger; other lamas who visited Beijing tried to isolate themselves inside their monasteries. Yet Mongols and Tibetans did die in large numbers, as the virus could not be contained. The




Illustrations depicting smallpox from the *Imperially Commissioned Golden Mirror of Medical Learning*, published in 1742.

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Qing were quick to take advantage. The last Mongol holdout against Qing domination, Prince Amursana, died of the disease in 1757; one historian estimated that up to 40 percent of his followers died of smallpox, more than from combat or famine. As lands emptied, Qing troops moved in, clearing the way for future Chinese settlement—and for the sweeping claims the modern People's Republic of China has made to Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet.

A second disease, endemic in China since the 18th century, would take an equally global toll. The plague bacillus, which devastated Europe in the Black Death, remained active in the high mountains on the Sino-Burmese border into the 18th century. It then followed the tracks of merchants, miners, soldiers, and travelers through southwestern China. But at the turn of the 20th century it broke out of its Chinese bubble through Hong Kong to infect the entire world, producing several plague pandemics in the 1900s that struck North and South America and killed more than 100,000 people. Chinatowns in Hawaii and San Francisco were quarantined. Newspapers in the American West attacked Chinese immigrants as disease-ridden hordes.

In 1910, when plague broke out again in Manchuria, Qing China's first public health activists began to study the disease with the aid of Western specialists. The Malaysian-born physician Wu Lien-teh was the first to promote the wearing of cloth masks, which sharply cut the fatality rate. The World Health Organization later developed from this pioneering international alliance against a microscopic enemy.

The 1742 encyclopedia shows the dedication and depth of Chinese medical research and its imperial sponsors—knowledge that would be used both to save lives and in the making of empire. Pandemics, like wars, are ruthless auditors that test the resilience of national and international orders. Some regimes use them for domination; others find in them an opportunity for collaboration. At least once in the past, China and the Western world collaborated against a common threat. Can it happen again? ■

**PETER C. PERDUE** is a professor of history at Yale University and the author of *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia*.

# Lionel Gelber Prize
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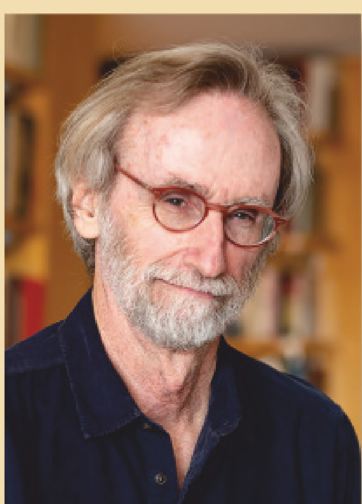
# THE LIGHT THAT FAILED: A RECKONING

*by* IVAN KRASTEV *and* STEPHEN HOLMES
*Allen Lane UK/Penguin Random House*



Ivan Krastev is a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna and the chairman of the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia. A contributing opinion writer for the *International New York Times*, he is a founding board member of the European Council on Foreign Relations and author of the widely acclaimed *After Europe*.



Stephen Holmes is Professor of Law at NYU School of Law and the author of many books on liberalism, including *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism*. His work focuses on the history of liberalism, the disappointments of democratization after communism, and the challenge of managing globalized threats within the framework of liberal constitutionalism.

*"This book, full of sparkling insight and subtle analysis, explains why liberal democracy failed to become a universal ideology despite its victory over communism. The authors show how Western triumphalism of the 1990s failed to take into account the distinctive history and culture of states that were seeking to imitate and embed democracy. Although the peoples of former communist countries joined the EU and NATO and signed up to liberal values and the rule of law, they became alienated by the corruption and inequality that followed. The analysis of politics and culture in the former Eastern Europe is original and riveting. Krastev and Holmes show how Russia and China learned from a West that betrayed its own values and broke its own rules. This account of how liberalism lost it way is candid and incisive but it is not pessimistic. There is no reason why illiberalism and nativism should continue if 'chastised' liberals learn from their mistakes and The Light that Failed will surely help them do so. An original and important book for our times."*

– The 2020 Prize Jury: Janice Gross Stein (Jury Chair), Cameron Abadi, Sir Lawrence Freedman, Margaret MacMillan, Kishore Mahbubani, and Jeffrey Simpson.

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